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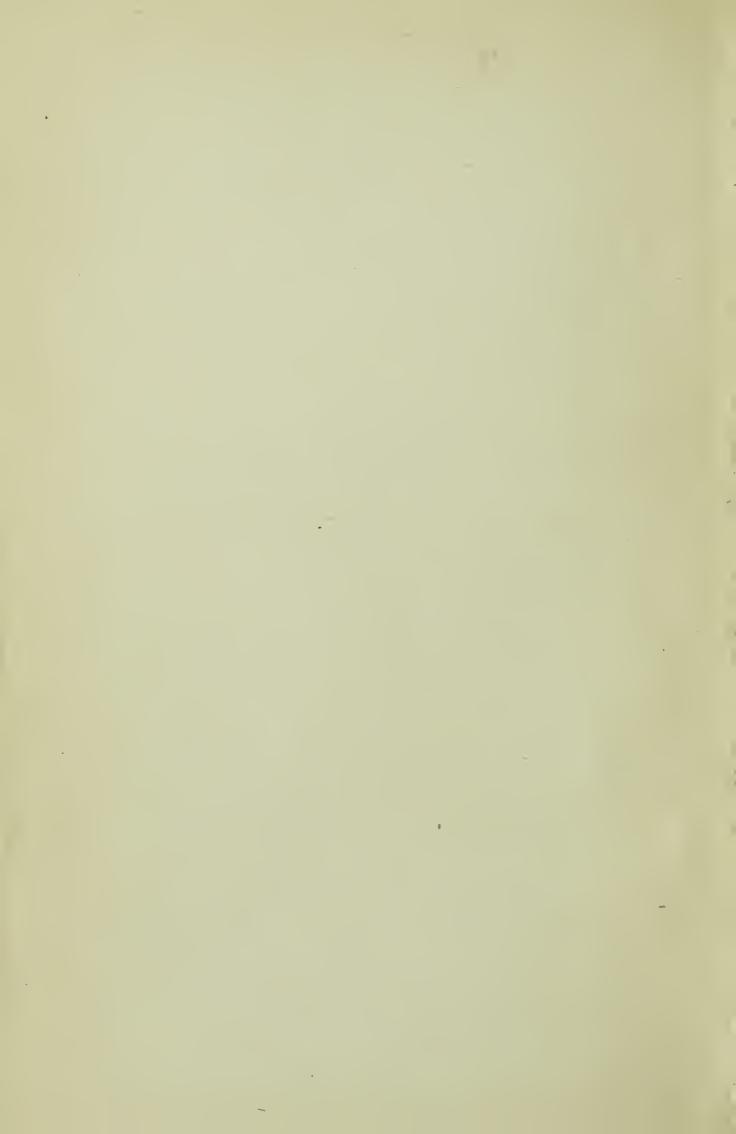
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# THE LEAST OF ALL LANDS.



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#### THE

# LEAST OF ALL LANDS:

SEVEN CHAPTERS

ON THE TOPOGRAPHY OF PALESTINE

IN RELATION TO ITS HISTORY.

BY

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When I visited Palestine last year, I had no thought of writing a book about it. I found, somewhat to my surprise, that for reasons referred to at the beginning of the first chapter, an ordinary visitor who tries to observe for himself can still do something to promote a better understanding of its topography and history. Such was the origin of the present volume. It has, in substance, appeared already in the pages of the Madras Christian College Magazine. I have to thank the conductors of that periodical for permission to publish my articles in the present form. A few references to Indian history and Indian localities have been retained. They should, however, be easily intelligible, in the connection in which they stand, to readers unacquainted with India.

W. M.

October, 1888,



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### THE LEAST OF ALL LANDS.

#### CHAPTER I.

THE LAND AND ITS POWER TO INSPIRE.

The Holy Land has been described often, and described well. It may be thought that there is no room for more to be said about it—especially by one who does not profess to have explored it thoroughly, or to be able to speak with authority on any of the chief problems it presents. This, however, is not quite the case. Rather, it seems to me that the reading public has just reached that stage of acquaintance with Palestine in which those who have some little thing to say about special aspects or special parts of it, may most fitly make their modest contribution to the common stock of knowledge.

The student of the history of Israel has facilities enough and to spare for obtaining a general acquaint-ance with Israel's land, and with such illustrations as the land and its inhabitants still afford of the manners and customs of ancient times. But the leading books on Palestine deal with the country as a whole.

Their writers have, therefore, had no room for detailed accounts of particular scenes, or for setting fully forth the help which such scenes give in understanding particular incidents in the history. And indeed the writers of the best known books have but seldom even aimed at giving their readers an exact idea of individual spots which history has made memorable. Their object seems rather—and very properly—to have been to give a view of the land as a whole, of its general relations to the people who dwelt in it and its general effect on the events transacted in it. that this has been done, and well done, the time has come when students of the history may be invited to take the further step of acquainting themselves with the scenes of particular occurrences. When they do so, they will find that a better acquaintance with the scenes often sets the events in a fresh light,—makes it easier to understand the exact way in which they occurred and their exact bearing on historical developments in after years.

In my own case, though I have long been a reader of books on the topography of Palestine, I found that a leisurely visit to certain spots and a little quiet examination of their peculiarities, cleared up difficulties which no book I had read had tried to solve, or even to state, and gave me a vivid idea of the true historical significance of the events transacted at them.

What has been valuable in this way to myself may be of some value to others—to those especially who wish to pierce the veil of glory which hangs between the devout inquirer and events related in sacred story, who wish to see these events as the plain everyday occurrences which the vast majority of them were to those who played a part in them or witnessed them. In nearly every case, my attempt to describe certain localities minutely and to correlate them closely with the records, is—so far as I am aware—a first attempt. It may be accepted as, at all events, preparing the way for something better. It is only when what I have tried to do for a few localities and events is done, and better done, for a hundred others, that the Land as it is to-day will have been made to give all the illustration which it is capable of giving to the long series of occurrences which has made the history of Israel so boundlessly significant for mankind.

There is another, though a less important, way in which it seems to me that an ordinary visitor to the Holy Land can help those who have not visited it to vivify and utilize the knowledge they draw from the books which avowedly describe it. It is by setting down the general impressions which the country has made upon himself. A well-worn saying warns us of the danger of not seeing the wood for the trees. In reading accounts, however accurate and graphic, of

region after region and district after district, one is likely to get wrong impressions, if any impression at all, of the country as compared with other countries. From this danger, the reader of a book of description may be partly freed, if he carries with him such general ideas of the country as are more likely to suggest themselves to a mere visitor than to one who knows it well and wishes to describe it fully.

Thus my little volume professes to be simply a humble supplement to the well-known books on the topography of Palestine. It aims, on the one hand, at recording a few general impressions which it may be advantageous to readers of such books to bear constantly in mind. It aims, on the other, at a more detailed description of a few localities, and a fuller discussion of how the nature of these localities bore upon important historical events than can be given in books of more extended scope. In this chapter and the next, I shall mention the leading impressions made on me by the country as a whole. In the remaining chapters, with reference to a few particular localities, I shall endeavour to show how attentive study of the ground removes many obscurities in the brief narratives that remain to us, and places in their right historical relation events the significance of which—from misapprehension of the way in which they happened —has been too often largely misunderstood.

The chief impression left with me, as is probably the case with most visitors, is referred to in the title I have chosen. Of all historic lands, Palestine is the smallest. It is the smallest even literally, if individual cities, such as Tyre, or Rome, or Florence, are left out of view. It is the smallest comparatively beyond all doubt—the smallest in proportion to the weight and volume of the influence it has exerted on mankind and the place it has taken in their thoughts. From point after point in journeying through it, one can see right across from the Jordan to the Sea:—that is, more than all the breadth that can be assigned to the Palestine which has any permanent significance in history. The district beyond the Jordan was no doubt in theory a portion of the country; and it did, from time to time, play a part of some importance in its But, on the whole, it lay beyond the bounds within which the work of Israel was done. It was not more intimately connected with the nation's historic life than Macedonia or Epirus with that of classic Greece, or Lithuania with that of Poland in the days of Poland's greatness. And while Palestine had its true boundary in the Jordan on the East, it never really extended so far as the Mediterranean on the West. The great maritime plain was indeed held by David and the stronger kings as its overlords; but only such portions as are half inclosed among the

Eastern hills were at any time the fixed abode of men of the race of Israel. It was held, down to the latest times of Israelitish story,—and held securely though tribute might be sometimes paid for it,—by the Philistines and other races of highly civilised and commercial lowlanders. The great plain was as little a part of the real land of Israel as Wales was a part of England in the ages when English history was taking shape for all its future. It was much less a part of Israel than Wales has long ago become of England. Thus a good third has to be cut off from a territory which, from point after point, can be surveyed from side to side, if we wish to form an idea of the breadth of the real land.

Its length, it is true, is not so insignificant. Yet even that is small. The heights around Hebron, the capital of the South, can be seen from Jerusalem; and seen not merely as a fringe along the distant sky, but as neighbouring hills which form the most conspicuous feature of the view. From the heights about Jerusalem, Gerizim and Ebal can be similarly seen; and these last are near and prominent features in the landscape that is spread beneath Mount Tabor,—from which again the most northerly point that was ever included within the historic home of Israel may be seen as plainly. Thus at two double steps,—if the expression be allowed,—the eye can survey the utmost length of Pales-

ing it, be held to exceed one hundred and twenty miles. Its breadth may be set down as averaging less than thirty. The area of the whole country is about equal to that of Cornwall and Devonshire in England, or the counties of Banff, Aberdeen, and Kincardine in Scotland, taken together. Or,—to take Indian illustrations,—the Holy Land is about the size of the Chingle-put District, and considerably less than the Collectorate of Salem or the kingdom of Travancore.

Assuredly Palestine should be called the smallest among lands. In so calling it, I have not forgotten that other little land which alone can be supposed to rival it in the influence it has exerted on the world. Greece is a little land as well as Palestine. But even if, in computing the area of Greece, no account be taken of the far-spread colonies in Asia, and Sicily, and Italy, which produced so many of her leading minds, the peninsula alone which we regard as the home-land of the Hellenic race, would cut up into many Palestines. Or, if anyone should insist that little Attica is the real Greece of history, I should still reply that if Greece is to be cut down to Attica, Palestine must in all fairness be similarly cut down to the territory of the kingdom or the tribe of Judah. For Judah was a much better representative of Palestine than Attica was of Most of the poets and prophets who tried to

train the nation for its work were men of Judah. Most of the deeds that give importance to the nation's history, had some immediate bearing on Judah and its famous capital. Now Judah is less than Attica if Attica is less than Palestine. But the true comparison,—the only one I will consent to institute,—is between Greece with its many cantons or loosely confederated groups of cities, Attica, Beeotia, Achaia, Laconia and the rest upon the one hand, and Israel with its twelve or thirteen tribes upon the other. Thus, even when Greece is called to mind, Palestine stands conspicuous above all other lands for the amazing disproportion between the importance of its history and the smallness of the theatre on which that history was transacted. as it may be fitly termed the least of all lands, so the further saying of the parable from which that phrase is drawn, may fitly be applied to it. whether men approve of the fact or disapprove of it, a fact it certainly is that in the moral and spiritual sphere it has become the greatest among lands, so that the nations of the earth have come and lodged beneath its branches and eaten of its fruit.

Another impression that I brought away with me is, that important though the country has been in history it will never be important in history again. I merely mention the impression. I do not wish to raise, and still less to discuss, the question whether the

impression is a just one. But I can hardly believe that anyone familiar with the facts of bygone history and of present social life, can traverse the country without feeling that it belongs to an order of things that has wholly and for ever passed away. To the man of the modern world, however deeply he may feel that here is the source of all his holiest feelings and highest hopes, a visit to Palestine must resemble that of a worker in the full activities of life to

> "The schoolboy spot We ne'er forget, though we are there forgot."

That spot may awaken the most interesting memories to its visitor. It may have a charm for him which no other spot, however beautiful, can possess. Yet he feels that it has passed out of his life for ever, and that nothing done in it can have much significance for him again. Similarly, the man who speculates about the future story of the world in Palestine, is sure to feel that no influence will again go out from it to change that story's course.

It is not simply that it is a land of ruins. Certainly it is that:—a land not merely of buildings that have fallen into decay, but of undecipherable heaps of stones. The inhabited villages themselves have the appearance of ruinous heaps. They have even more of the appearance than of the reality. The thick unplastered

walls and flat mud roof which are nearly universal, make the dwellings, which doubtless convey some idea of home to their inhabitants, appear a shapeless and incoherent mass to an eye accustomed to different One's first impression about an ordinary structures. country village in Palestine is not so much that its stones have been piled together to make human habitations, as that holes for shelter have been dug amongst stones that have been strewed abroad by the fall of some mighty tower. And the impression is not always wholly incorrect. But it is not only the heaps of ruins upon all sides which suggest that the land has done its work and is cast aside from influence on the future of the world. In part, that impression comes from the character of the infrequent cultivation. Nearly all the cornfields are thickly bespread with stones, over which waves a stunted and a scanty crop. The few vineyards and oliveyards are covered with stones as plentifully; and nearly every landscape gives an allpervading sense of stony poverty and barrenness. No doubt there are oases in the desert. There are few richer spots on earth than the vale of Shechem, even as it is to-day. There are other spots that are richly productive still; and yet others, like the plains by Jericho and the glorious amphitheatre of Gennesaret, which, though mostly uncultivated now, show the clearest signs of a natural fruitfulness that can nowhere be excelled. Nor is there any difficulty in believing that the land was once immensely more productive and populous than it is. The records tell of thousands of fighting men sent out from districts where not so many hundreds, and not so many scores, can be discovered now; and wherever the beaten track is left, abundant proof may be seen that on this point the records are trustworthy. Almost everywhere there are ruined cisterns, and broken terrace-walls, and old inclosures—marks patent at a glance of a once abundant population,—where there is nothing but desolation now.

But while all this is so, the impression is immovable that the productiveness of the land is at an end, and that it will never again be the home of an independent or powerful nation. The small scale of everything serves to deepen the impression. So also does the filth and squalor of the few inhabitants that remain. There are places, like Bethlehem and Nablous, which are as clean and have a population as vigorous and active as one expects to see in an oriental town. There are a few, like Nazareth, that rise decidedly above this standard. But, on the whole, such absence of energy, such contented burrowing amid filth, such utter dejectedness of spirit, can be met with nowhere elsecertainly not in India or even Egypt—as seem to the passing traveller to be characteristic of the remaining inhabitants everywhere in Palestine.

I speak merely of the impression left, of the feeling irresistibly awakened, by what one sees. I am not concerned to argue that the course of history will conform to this impression. One who loves the land for the sake of its wondrous memories may, if he pleases, indulge the hope that some such restoration is still in store for it as the last generation saw in Greece, or as, on a larger and more hopeful scale, has fallen in our own day to the lot of Italy and Rome. And one who tries, need not find it impossible to imagine ways in which some restoration of the kind may be brought about naturally enough. do I contend in this place with those whose faith it is that the restoration which in some moods one can hardly help desiring, will yet be effected by supernatural instrumentality. Certainly I do not expect anything of this kind myself. I think the words on which this faith is based have a far worthier and deeper reference than a reference to the literal land of Israel would be. Perhaps these prophecies may some day be fulfilled in a sense uncommonly like the literal one. But even should it be so, that sense is not the one to which the words of the prophets and poets of Israel will be regarded as mainly pointing by those who understand and sympathize with the purposes of God. All I wish to say at present is that the general impression made by the whole appearance of

the country is, that it will never again become significant in history, and that it is destined to remain very much as it is, so long as the world runs on in its career.

And I think it is best that it should be so. have always been inhabitants enough to hand down the names of places by tradition. Most of the important sites have been satisfactorily determined, though it is not yet half a century since anything worthy to be called research began. With no great amount of pains and patience, nearly every point in which the geography bears upon the history may be settled, and settled far more easily and with far greater certainty than if the land were thronged with busy multitudes and a centre of the world's affairs. Of this there is a signal instance within the bounds of Palestine itself. The one place in it that has hardly ever ceased to be of some political importance is its capital. the natural consequence has followed. While solid results have been attained with but little trouble in investigating the other historic sites, every feature of Jerusalem is still the subject of envenomed antiquarian debate. Nothing can be regarded as ascertained about its topography except the ineffaceable valleys that surround it; and this, in spite of labour and thought many times exceeding what has been spent on the whole of the country outside its walls. What would not students of its topography give if Jerusalem had been left as desolate as Shiloh and Samaria have been through all these centuries? And would it be loss or gain to the student of classical antiquity if Athens had been surrendered to final decay since the time of Demosthenes, or Rome since it was sacked by Alaric? The opinion is, to say the least of it, defensible, that it is best that Palestine should remain comparatively a waste, since thus it will attest the truth and explain the meaning of that history which the world, as it advances, will always become more eager to understand far better than if its landmarks were obliterated in the turmoil of modern life, and its old associations replaced by new ones.

Another feature of the country by which a visitor is struck is its remarkably varied character. Nearly every variety of climate is exemplified somewhere within its bounds. The maritime plain and the western slopes of the central hills have the climate appropriate to the latitude. The broad summit of the ridge which forms the backbone of the country,—along which lie Hebron and Bethlehem and Jerusalem, Gibeah and Bethel, and most of those other sites which the world never will forget,—is high enough to afford a climate like that of lands much nearer to the poles. The deep cleft of the Jordan, descending in its southern extremity nearly fourteen hundred feet below sea-level, is cast in the mould and brings forth many of the pro-

ducts of lands that are neighbours of the equator. One day, at Jaffa, I enjoyed a balmy freshness and a soothing warmth like that of an early summer on the shores of Italy. The next, I was shivering at Jerusalem in damp raw cold like that of a Scottish April. Two days thereafter, by the Dead Sea, I found myself in the midst of sweltering heat like that of Malabar, and exposed to an unclouded sun almost rivalling in fierceness the sun of Madras in May.

What is true of the climate is equally true of the landscape. There are few types of scenery of which an example cannot be found in Palestine. Of course there is not room for broad fat plains like those of 2 Egypt or Tanjore; but on a small scale there are places still, and once there were many more, that must have had the same effect as these on the character of their inhabitants. Of winding valleys, and cultivated slopes, and all the varied picturesqueness of hill and dale, of hill and dale both bare and clothed with forest there can have been no lack in ancient days; while ravines and crags, unrivalled in their ruggedness, are never very distant along the whole of the eastern boundary. And, small although the country be, there must always have been enough of waste land in it to bring the majority of its inhabitants occasionally in contact with Nature in her solitary majesty. upland pastures in the wilderness of Judah, the

eastern slopes of Mount Ephraim and Gilboa, must have always been pretty much the lonely tracts that they are at present; while few regions present such a scene of grand and savage desolation as the valley of the Kelt and the heights of Quarantana, which rise right above the fertility of Jericho.

Now, it is not difficult to see how important the part was which this variety in the scenery played in the training of the people. It is a fact not regarded as doubtful by any inquirer, that the character of a community, and especially those feelings which naturally find utterance in their poetry, are largely dependent on the scenery of their abode. It is equally undenied that the character and sentiment thus developed in a community affect, less or more, the tendencies and thoughts of each individual that belongs to it, and of those gifted ones most of all who become its leaders and its teachers. True, it is difficult to point out with scientific accuracy what effect one kind of scenery has and what another. It is difficult to determine in detail the relations between the features of a country and the aspirations and tendencies of its inhabitants. But no one questions that there are such relations, or that they are a powerful agency in moulding the destinies of men. Now, if the features of their abode thus leave an impress on a people, it is a plain inference that a people whose abode is peculiarly varied,

will be varied in emotion and aspiration,—will have many thoughts and many feelings instead of the few that are awakened in men whose country is alike in all its regions and in all its features.

The objection may perhaps be urged that each man, and each family or clan, can only live in one place after all, and therefore that though a nation whose territory is varied in point of scenery, may have citizens remarkably different from each other in character and feeling, yet the common national character is not affected by this variety of landscape. leader of thought, it may be said, each poet or other teacher, if affected by scenery at all, will reflect only those scenes with which he is familiar in his own But to this objection, there is a twofold All influences that affect character and feeling and tendencies of thought, spread with wonderful rapidity through any mass of men of the same descent and living under the same general conditions. is a contagiousness about thoughts and sentiments, so that when thoroughly awakened in one, or in a few, they are communicated, no man can tell precisely how, to the whole mass among which these men dwell. our own day, what may be called the scientific spirit, the desire to question and understand everything, the reluctance to take anything on trust, has spread through every European country, till it is all-powerful with

millions upon millions who never opened a scientific book or set themselves to deal with a scientific ques-The thing, as is often said, is in the air. the Zeit-geist, the spirit of the Age. So it is with those influences of scenery which are undoubtedly far more powerful in earlier stages of society than we have any experience of their being. Whatever effect the precipices of Beth-Arbel, the fat valleys of Ephraim, or the vine-clad hills of Judah, had on those who felt their influence first, would spread in the ordinary course of things quickly through the nation. But, besides this, there were special reasons why such influences should be rapidly transmitted and thoroughly received in the case of Israel. The whole people were instructed to meet, and in the prosperous periods of their history large numbers of them did meet, on festive occasions at sacred shrines. Such meetings were far more numerous, and, in point of theory at all events, far more regularly attended than was the custom in any other land. A special channel was thus prepared along which the current of feeling set in motion by each particular aspect of nature in the country might flow easily abroad to all its inhabitants.

Thus the varied scenery of Palestine has been a powerful reason why the literature of the Israelites,—the expression of the spirit formed by the peculiarly varied aspects of nature in their dwelling-place—has

found a home so readily in the hearts of every people it has come to. Read in distant lands, under all the disadvantages of translation into a foreign tongue, it has yet spoken to men's hearts in every region of the globe, and been adopted, we all know how widely, as the one befitting vehicle of what is deepest in their feelings and most aspiring in their thoughts. Of course there are other and deeper reasons for the universal acceptability of the literature that has been gathered together in the collection of works which we term the Bible; but the form and spirit of its poetry is one reason amongst others for this. Now, that form and spirit arose largely from the varied scenery of the land which was the birth-place of the literature; and this is the only aspect of the question with which I am concerned at present.

But while my impression was strong that for purposes of poetry Palestine is an epitome of the world, I must record the impression also that much even in Hebrew literature cannot be read aright without a sight, or a full understanding, of the scenes amidst which it sprang. Passage after passage of it occurred to me, while I wandered among its native hills and valleys, which it seemed to me that I had never grasped the meaning of before. A reference to a single one of these may fitly close this chapter.

There are few even among Hebrew songs in which

natural scenery is more grandly made the vehicle of eternal truth than one of those included in

"The chorus intoned When the Levites went up to the altar in glory enthroned."

It was sung by the processions as they wound upwards with slow and stately step to the summit of the Temple hill, and its key-note is:—"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about his people from henceforth even for ever." The man to whom this strain occurs when he stands on the broad platform which hides whatever relics of the Temple remain, is struck with sudden wonder. the mountains are round about Jerusalem"!—why, it seems to him that there are no mountains round Jerusalem at all. Away to the south there are mountains visible, but too distant to give any appearance of defence. Close at hand there is the broad low ridge of Olivet, rising not quite two hundred feet above where he stands, and sloping so gently and so regularly that it looks not so much of a hindrance as a help to an army that should descend it to attack the sacred town. There is not a city anywhere that seems more bare of all natural defence than Jerusalem does upon the spot where this song pealed How then was Jehovah round about forth so often.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Psalm cxxv.

his people? The answer came from what the listeners knew about the mighty fortress to which, each from his distant village, they had journeyed upwards. The mountains do not rise above Jerusalem. They do not stand around it like a wall which those within its shelter need only glance at in order to feel that they are safe. The mountains are below Jerusalem. are hidden to the eye, but there all the time in majesty and strength. It seems as if a few steps would carry an assailant from Olivet into the heart of the city; but deep between them is the valley of Jehoshaphat, whose rugged side is a mountain in itself. It seems as if an invader who had won the heights towards Bethlehem and Mar-Elias had only to swoop down upon Jerusalem and make it an easy prey; but there also the sides of the broad deep valley of the son of Hinnom, which sweeps round grandly from the north, form a mountainous defence, concealed from view till one stands upon its brink but hopelessly impassable to a hostile force.

On all sides save the north, where the manhood of the nation gathered thickest and should have been a sure defence, there are mountains beneath Jerusalem, which the dwellers within it do not ordinarily see but which have made it in every age the strongest metropolis that any nation known to history has possessed. And it is not only the mountains on which it stands that

thus defend it. There is hill beyond hill on all sides, and ravine within ravine, which an enemy must laboriously surmount before he can even look upon the strength of Zion. All of them lie beneath the view of one gazing from Jerusalem; but Assyrian and Babylonian, Macedonian and Roman, Crusader and Saracen, have all experienced in their turn that these hidden mountains are the hardest of all obstacles for a foeman to overcome. So it is that Jehovah is round about His people. They do not see Him, but His strength is there to shield them.

But there is something else about these defending hills that adds largely to the meaning of the metaphor. There is none of them impassable by itself, or even very hard to pass. Jerusalem has no defences, either close at hand or far away, which can be trusted to guard it without steady effort on the part of its defenders. It is not like many a castled crag in Lebanon; not like Petra, that nest among the rocks of Edom; not It has no such like Dowlatabad in the Deccan. strength as enables the defenders to content themselves with sitting still upon their precipices till the besiegers grow weary or waste away. The mountains and the valleys round it, particularly those at a distance, afford position after position in which the skill and courage of a few hundred faithful soldiers may frustrate the best efforts of thousands to approach it. They do not contain even one position the defenders of which can afford to be inactive—not one in which skill and thought as well as courage and activity, are not imperatively required. Those who defend Jerusalem must work along with—must thoughtfully take advantage of—that strength of the hills with which the hand of God in nature has begirt her. So Jehovah is round about His people.

Thus the figure which is the key-note of this poem carries one who sees its natural basis, and therefore its true significance, into the very heart of the principles of that moral training which Israel passed through, and of that whole revelation which Israel was chosen to be the means of explaining to mankind.

But I must not expand an illustration into a sermon.

#### CHAPTER II.

THE LAND A SCHOOL OF MORAL TRAINING.

I have spoken of the effect which the scenery of a country has on the sentiments of its inhabitants,—on those feelings and aspirations which find expression in their poetry and through it affect their character, according to the law set forth in the oft-quoted saying, "Let me make the songs of a nation, and I care not who has the making of its laws." This is an obscure and difficult subject—a subject on which it is not only difficult clearly to express one's thoughts, but still more difficult to be satisfied that any useful line of thought can be got hold of or followed out at all.

But a country affects the character of its inhabitants in ways much more direct and traceable than through the poetry which it inspires; and Palestine did much in this plainer way to determine the moral qualities of the nation that possessed it. There was no impression that stayed with me more constantly than that it is exactly the kind of country that is almost certain to produce a strongly marked character in its inhabitants. I say almost certain; for, after all, natural, external, agencies are only one factor, and not the most im-

portant factor, in giving a definite character to either individuals or communities. The spring, the source, of character is within. There must be something of life, of aspiration, of receptivity, independent of all that is natural or material, before a well-marked character can be formed in any section or in any member of the human race. Some of the most peculiar and most impressive lands have always been inhabited by peoples whose minds are as featureless and dull as it seems possible for the minds of men to be. Palestine with its present population, is an example and reminder of this.

But where there is the needful inward life,—the germ of a marked character—in a community independently, the physical surroundings are the most powerful of all agents in developing and moulding it. In this, as in other respects, human nature resembles that vegetable kingdom to which the great master of parabolic teaching loved so much to liken it. No force of outward circumstance will make a pebble send out tendrils or bear fruit. It is only on a living seed that the soil can take effect. Neither can any soil however good, or any culture however careful, make a grain of wheat grow up into a vine, or the seed of the tamarind produce a banian. But once the seed is there, the extent to which it is developed, the extent to which the ideal of its kind is realised in it,

depends upon the external influences of culture, soil and climate. Such is the function of a country in determining the character of the nation which has it for a home. If the country has well-marked peculiarities, the nation may be expected to have peculiarities of character which in large measure correspond.

Doubtless, there are here also complications and limitations. It is not the most strongly marked lands that produce nations of the most strongly featured characters. There seems to be a degree of marked peculiarity in a country which is greater than men can profitably bear. Extremes in this, as in other things, are dangerous. The communities which have had characters peculiarly their own, and which on that account have wielded unusual moral power and done more than others to make the world what it is, have been those whose places of abode exhibited characteristic features but not features of the most pronounced or emphatic kind. It was not the cities which nestled amid the peaks of Parnassus or the wild chaos of Arcadian mountains that made Greece immortal. It was the dwellers in the long-drawn valleys of Laconia that gave her such strength and solidity as she possessed. It was those whose home was on the softened slopes of Attica that crystallized her thought till it became a priceless heritage for mankind. Not where the majesty of the purple

Apennines is revealed most fully but where it is softened by distance and mingles with the plain, did the city rise which is the embodiment of order and of law for all succeeding time. And the character of those Norsemen who poured a new flood of energy into dying Europe was formed in the pastoral dales and by the grass-encircled flords of Norway, not amidst the savagery of Icelandic solitudes, however it may be in Iceland that the memory of their deeds has been best preserved.

In this respect also, the well-being of men and nations runs parallel to that of plants. Excessive richness in the soil prevents the full development of the grain as effectually as barrenness. An oversupply of water is as fatal as the want of it. In things natural as well as in things moral, the prayer is a wise one:--"Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me." But it is precisely such a moderated markedness of feature,—if the expression will be pardoned—that the Holy Land presents. There is no feature in it that is not largely exemplified in other lands, and there is none marked so strongly as to be beyond the capacity of the human mind to be impressed by and reflect. And precisely because the country is so varied and so marked, and yet not overmarked, in all its peculiarities of feature, I found myself constantly observing points in which it seemed to

me to have had a most powerful influence in determining the character of those who wrought out the ever significant history that was transacted within its bounds. I wish to specify in the present chapter some of the ways in which—rightly or wrongly—I felt convinced that the land had been manifestly, as well as more doubtfully through the sentiments awakened by it, an instrument, and in some respects the chief instrument, in making the people of Israel what they were.

I do not know that I can better summarise my impressions upon this point than by following a classification of moral qualities which was very familiar to the Israelites themselves. A symbol that constantly met the eye in Israel's palmy days, and that undoubtedly did much to inspire and guide the nation's thought, was the symbol of the Cherubim. were emblematic figures in which were combined the most distinctive features of the man, the lion, the eagle and the ox. They appear most commonly, though probably not always, to have presented the head of the man, the feet and claws of the lion, the wings of the eagle, and the body of the ox. whatever the combination, there was always something of each of these four creatures in them. The meaning of the symbol admits of little doubt. It was portrayed especially in the Tabernacle, or Tent of worship,

and afterwards in the Temple, and was thus a constant reminder to the worshippers of what the qualities were which they must show if they were rightly to serve that God whom they believed to have chosen them, but who at the same time was regarded as the Lord of the earth and all its fulness. They should have—they could not fill the place which they believed themselves meant to fill unless they had—the intelligence, the wisdom, the forethought of a man, combined with, inextricably interwoven with, the courage of the lion, the activity of the eagle, the steady perseverance of the bullock.

Now, I was impressed in every landscape that I looked on in Palestine with the way in which the land is fitted to foster these very qualities in men whose lives are spent in it; and with the way in which it is fitted to foster them in due combination and harmony with each other. Of course the question is one entirely of degree. Every country is fitted to afford no inconsiderable training in intelligence, in courage, in activity and perseverance to those who live laborious lives within it and who have to defend it against aggressors. Particularly is this the case when the bulk of the population follow avocations which, like those of the husbandman and herdsman, bring them into close and constant contact with the land they live in. Every country in the world is fitted by its Creator's

hand to give to its children, in greater or in less degree, such a training as will make them, if they submit to it, what the Cherubim so expressively declared that all men ought to become,—wise and brave and active and persevering. What struck me in Palestine was the altogether unusual degree in which it was likely to give precisely such a training to a people who held it, in the circumstances and condition of the world as it was three thousand years ago. I can take time to mention only a few of the ways in which this constantly occurred to me.

The nation as a whole depended on agriculture. Trade, to which the genius of the modern representatives of Israel seems so extraordinarily adapted, played no part in the education of the people. They were scarcely introduced to it till the days of Solomon, when their character had already taken, on the whole, its lasting set and bias. Neither did pastoral avocations do much to make the Israelites what they were. Or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that those tribes to the East of the Jordan, among whom pastoral pursuits predominated, fell away practically from the nation and ceased to be Israelites in any sense that is significant in history. No doubt, even in the narrow land which was Israel's real home, there were flocks of sheep and herds of cattle; but the tending of these was the business of comparatively few, and was carried on only in subordination to the calling by which the great majority of households obtained the bulk of their livelihood. Agriculture was the staple employment of the nation. And nowhere did success in cultivation more strikingly demand skill and thought on the part of the cultivator than it did in Palestine of old. Nowhere, therefore, was husbandry more of a training in intelligence to those who gave themselves in earnest to it.

There was a profounder sense than appears upon the surface in the promise made through Moses that Israel would be brought "into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths springing forth in valleys and hills." These brooks and streams had to be cared for, each in the way that the lie of the ground rendered necessary, if their waters were not to run to waste. Every household had to exercise thought and care, to meet its own peculiar circumstances, if its little patch of ground was to provide it with a maintenance. Besides, it was no single kind, and no few kinds, of grain or fruit that supplied men's wants in Palestine. The products of the country were almost infinitely various; and the nature, the habits, and the needs of each had to be understood and rightly dealt with before any sufficient harvest could be reaped. The climate, too, is as various as the soil, and careful attention to the signs of the sky was necessary always. Much of the cultivation was on terraced hillsides, where any failure of the husbandman's skill or care is even more sure than elsewhere to bring calamity quickly in its train.

In these points, and others which might easily be added, there is a marked and instructive contrast to that land of Egypt out of which the nation came. In Egypt, the processes of husbandry, if carried on upon a far more extensive scale, are also far more simple. In its unchanging climate, the husbandman has little need to observe the signs of the sky, and has little of that practical education which those receive who have to provide against sudden changes in the weather. In Egypt, the husbandman's supply of water is secure. He needs only to keep the channel free along which the fertilising stream has flowed for ages, and to raise the water into it by hard but simple toil. He cultivates the same grain in each succeeding year. He has no need to acquaint himself with the varying wants of many different sorts of grains and trees. He has but to learn his simple art in youth and then to practise it in ceaseless round until life and its labours close.  $T_0$ him, life may be a training in patient and persevering labour, but it can do little to impart readiness of resource or activity of mind.

It is true that agriculture in ancient Egypt made demands on the intelligence of some, and therefore

gave them an intellectual training, far superior to anything that was necessary in Palestine. To distribute and control the overflow of the bounteous river, to store up what was superfluous in the meantime for future use, to survey the whole fertile area so that each man should have his rights however often the flood swept away the ordinary landmarks:—these tasks, and others like them, made a far higher degree of theoretical knowledge and technical skill necessary in Egypt than any that was required in Palestine. But what was needed in the way of skilled adaptation of means to ends was done in Egypt by the thoughtful and educated few, while those who laboured with their hands needed nothing beyond the mechanical repetition of processes that had been in vogue for generations and that were hardly capable of improvement or of change. In Palestine, each husbandman had to think for himself. Most heads of families must have had olives, figs, and grapes, as well as different kinds of grain, produced upon their little properties. Most of them were to some extent herdsmen as well as husbandmen. Most of them had but some little brook or variable stream to rely upon for water, and had accordingly to face that problem of water-storage on a small scale which the deep-dug cisterns and the broken channels still scattered wide throughout the country show that they gained considerable skill in

solving. Altogether, there is no country in the world, or none of which I have any knowledge, which presented so many difficulties to the husbandman and promised him so rich a reward when these difficulties were overcome,—none, therefore, which afforded to the bulk of its inhabitants so good a mental training by means of their everyday pursuits, as Palestine must have done when her terraces and valleys were rich with varied produce and when flocks strayed by thousands on her mountains.

And if the cultivation of the land called out intelligence and trained it, so also did its defence. To this, in another connection, I have referred already. Every corner of the land was defensible, but defensible only if its defenders learnt to be prudent and skilful as well as brave. There were positions everywhere in which a handful might hold a far larger or better disciplined force at bay, but only on condition that the leaders had learnt to take advantage of the ground and that the followers had intelligence enough to sympathise with their leaders and obey them. There are no impassable defiles, and no positions in which rude valour, unaccompanied by skill, was enough to defend any considerable section of the land. There are not even positions in which such simple strategy as was successful at Morgarten would have much chance of triumph—none in which such a victory might be hoped for by the defenders as the Norwegian peasants gained in Romsdale, when their Scottish invaders "were dashed to pieces like earthen pots amongst the cliffs of Gudbrand."

In cultivation and defence alike, the land gave those who dwelt in it much to do. It taxed their intelligence and therefore trained it. It was a school in which not much was done for the pupils, but in which all that they did for themselves was bountifully rewarded; and which—as is the case with all such schools in our day and every day—gave a nobler and more trustworthy training than can in the very nature of things be given where learners have no hardness to endure and have all that they need done for them.

Closely connected with this subject is the way in which the land was fitted to develop courage—to be the means of communicating to its inhabitants those qualities of the lion which were always symbolized somehow in the Cherubim, and which are indispensable to a man or nation that is to do any part of God's work on earth. Here again, it is only a question of degree. In the days when the character of Israel was being formed, no nation could preserve a separate existence without a considerable amount of courage. If a country in those days maintained what was peculiar in its laws, or civilisation, or religion, it was proof that its sons were ready to sacrifice ease, and comfort,

and life itself, rather than that its social system should perish. And in every such case it may be assumed without detailed inquiry that the position of the city or the nature of the country had something to do with creating the courage which enabled its children successfully to defend it. But few things impressed me more than the very special way in which the whole conformation of the Holy Land must have kept the courage of its inhabitants in constant exercise and thereby have developed their courage to the full.

There was no part of the long narrow country which was the Palestine of history so far removed from foemen that the dwellers in it could afford to be supine. On the east, it is true that the kindred tribes who dwelt beyond the Jordan were some protection against distant enemies—protection enough to give the Israelites such security and leisure as might keep them from being degraded into a mere horde of warriors. But even there, the outlying defence was not enough to supersede the necessity for watchfulness or courage. All along the western frontier, there were the Philistines and kindred lowlanders, strong enough and hostile enough to keep self-denying courage constantly in exercise, yet not too strong to be successfully resisted whenever a brave and united effort was made. On the narrow apex of the country to the north and its more extended confines on the south, dwelt marauding tribes,

from whose incursions every Israelite of those parts had to be always ready to defend his homestead and his herds. And within the little land itself, there were strong cities remaining unsubdued which were peopled by hereditary enemies who would gladly take advantage of any moment of cowardice or dismay.

If ever nation was so placed that courage, and courage kept constantly in exercise, was necessary for its preservation, not to say for its prosperity, that nation was Israel from the time when it settled in Canaan under Joshua till its character received its final impress from king David, and grew confirmed and fixed, so far as national character is ever fixed, in the days of his majestic son. It shows true insight into the philosophy of history when Israel's historians of that later age declare that the foemen around the country and within it had been left there by a wise and loving Providence in order that they might be the means of trying the people and of training them. If all opposition had been crushed in the first burst of conquest, it would have been far more comfortable for all the succeeding generations; but they would in that case have lacked the discipline which alone could make them brave enough for the duty they had to do on It is character not comfort, not material, and earth. not mental acquisition, that is the aim in all true and healthy training whether of nations or of men.

But the thing that impressed me most with regard to the training of Israel in the lion-like qualities of the perfect man, remains to be mentioned. The strict injunction was left by Joshua that Jericho, the first stronghold captured in the conquest, should never again be fortified. The Benjamites, within whose territory it lay, were not, indeed, forbidden to reside in it or to cultivate its territory. The fertile plains around it must always have been the most productive and most valuable possession of the tribe. But the solemn threat was left on record that, if any man rebuilt the walls of Jericho, "with the loss of his first-born should he lay the foundation thereof, and with the loss of his youngest son should he set up the gates of it." The effect intended was produced. Centuries rolled by before anyone dared to set at nought the prohibition; and long before Jericho was again fortified the national character had been formed.

Until I saw the configuration of the country for myself, I had little idea of the meaning of Joshua's strange provision. Jericho stands right in the way of an enemy approaching from the east. It is at the mouth of all the converging passes by which an invader from that side can get access to any part of the south or centre of the Holy Land. If turned into a fortress, it would bar the approach of all aggressors from beyond the Jordan and the Dead Sea more effectually

than a fortress at Thermopylæ would have protected southern Greece, or than Stirling in the days of Bruce and of the Stewarts protected northern Scotland. Had Jericho been fortified and defended by a small and well-trained force, the dwellers in the far-spread slopes and valleys to the west could have afforded to take their ease, certain that till Jericho was taken—and the capture of a fortress was in those times an affair of years—no invader would entangle himself in the passes that led upwards to their mountain home.

To a ruler whose leading aim was the comfort and material prosperity of his people, the fortification of Jericho would have been the first concern. The care taken to prevent its being fortified shows that other than ordinary objects were aimed at by those who had the leadership of Israel. To them, the most important thing was not that the nation should be comfortable and rich, but that it should be vigorous and brave, and that it should learn to trust not in bulwarks raised by men but in that strength of the hills which God had given them and which their own skill and valour could make an effectual defence.

Such foresight as Joshua displayed is not quite unexampled in other history. Lycurgus, if tradition may be trusted, provided in his constitution that Sparta never should be fortified. At anyrate it is certain that the strongest of Grecian cities remained un-

walled through the proudest periods of her warlike history. There, too, the object was that the Spartans might be like lions. But the whole polity of Sparta was meant to train its citizens for warfare. This particular provision is of a piece with many more; and, as part of a system which aimed at making a small hereditary nobility secure in Laconia and predominant in Greece, there is nothing very surprising in it. the whole polity of Israel was directed to far other ends than those of war or conquest. Under it, fighting was a duty when the national existence was in danger; but the laws, the worship, and the festivals which were the centre of the nation's being, could be fully observed only if the normal state was one of peace. The condition for which Israel was taught to long, and pray, and labour, was one in which the art of war need be learned no more. All the more surprising is it to find a measure prohibited which would have rendered war but seldom necessary for a large part of the population from the very outset of their story. It seems to me a signal instance of how the whole training of Israel by means of the land that was given them, was intended not to procure good things for them but to make them good themselves. Let who will see in it nothing but a piece of wise foresight in which Joshua simply anticipated Lycurgus:—to me it appears that a higher wisdom than that of Joshua, or that of man, shines through

a provision so peculiar. But, in any case, it was impressive to see how Israel was taught to leave the very key of their country undefended—not in order that they might be turned into a nation of soldiers and be ready to use every opportunity to extend their power, but simply that they might learn to trust in an everpresent God and to keep in exercise that courage which confidence in God inspires.

Such is an outline of the proof that the discipline afforded by their home was likely to be helpful in making the Israelites intelligent and brave. I have still to indicate the effect which their country was fitted to have in the way of practically teaching them activity and steadiness.

With regard to activity like that of the eagle, I have said nearly enough already to show how the land was likely to promote it. It is through the body that man's soul is trained. Whatever secures activity of body, tends to impart activity of mind and energy of character. Here no doubt, as elsewhere, there is danger in extremes. The body may be taxed so severely as to absorb instead of promoting mental and moral energy. These principles are tolerably familiar in common life. The youth who gives all his time to books and none to exercise, if he survive to years of maturity at all, may perhaps have acquired much knowledge, but is little likely to have any activity of

intellect, and all but certain to have no energy of character. On the other hand, the youth who gives all his time to athletics, whose one aim is to keep himself in a state of so-called training, gains his end at the expense, perhaps of bodily health but certainly of the true activity of his whole nature. It is moderate and varied but habitual exercise in youth, that secures activity in the man throughout his years of earthly life. Now, what is true of the youth of men is true of nations and of races in that early and plastic period when their character is being formed. A young community which is under physical conditions that gravely discourage exercise, may show in its maturity much that is good, or even great, but not that earnestness and energy, not that force of will, which will make it an active servant of God or an active benefactor and guide to men. On the other hand, when the young community is subjected by circumstances to severe and constant bodily toil, or when extreme bodily exercise is imposed on it by custom or by law, the result is not very different. The Egyptians, whose character was formed beside the Nile, where the whole conditions are unfavourable to varied activity or exercise of body, have many a claim on the gratitude and admiration of mankind. But in energy of character and force of will they were always deficient; and when the time of trial came, Egypt sank easily and

for ever into the basest and most down-trodden of the kingdoms. Bœotia, where physical training was carried to its highest pitch and encouraged and regulated to the utmost, had its Pindar and Epaminondas; but these were but lights amidst the darkness which settled over the entire community until "Bœotian" became synonymous with grossly and stupidly inactive. The Alps and the Scottish Highlands, and many another mountain land, where physical activity and physical endurance must be carried far if the community is not to perish in its youth, have produced soldiers for whose onset a foe has seldom staid; but they have produced no races, and seldom even single men, who have been remarkable for force of will or for energy of the whole nature. It is in lands that lead naturally to constant yet moderate bodily exercise, in lands like Attica or Asturias, like Swabia or Normandy, that young communities develop characteristics which place them in the van of their age and make them leaders in the world's affairs. Those who wish fully to understand this, should read the speech in which Pericles is said by Thucydides to have contrasted the moral effects of the Athenian with those of the Spartan training.

Now of all lands, that of Israel is perhaps the best for encouraging in its inhabitants that constant yet moderate activity of body which develops and does not absorb activity of mind. It did not, indeed, afford

that training by means of the sea, of which, in the case of the Athenians, Pericles rightly makes so much. But for all other bodily training, it furnished an almost perfect field. There is no plain wide enough to deprive the dwellers in it of the influence of the mountains. The plain of Jezreel, which alone can be considered large in any sense, is but a few hours' journey broad where it is broadest; and the broadest part of it was never included in the real home of Israel. Thus every Israelite was called by his ordinary occupation to learn practical activity among mountains that were steep enough and high enough to tax and train his powers, yet not so steep or high as to interfere with the parallel development of his mind. The more one sees of Palestine the more clearly is it discerned to be a school peculiarly fitted for training a race that should be active and energetic alike in body and in mind.

All this will appear trivial to many, but not to those who have observed how often a small influence upon the child determines the whole future of the man, and who know enough of history to perceive the resemblance between the youth of individuals and the youth of nations. But to carry this discussion further would lead me into a field too difficult and too extensive for my present purpose.

There remains to be considered the training that Palestine afforded in the patience, the perseverance,

the steadiness of the ox. Here, too, I was struck with the moral effects which the country was fitted to have, and, within certain limits, actually had.

It is a fundamental principle in all inquiries of this kind that the character formed by habit when a race is impressible and plastic, becomes fixed as time rolls on, and is but little changed by anything that happens afterwards. It was by ordinary experience in the simple life of the generations that came after the Conquest—by the way in which agriculture was carried on and the land defended—that the character of Israel was intended to be formed. And through these simple agencies, a national character was formed to some extent, which, though it might be superficially modified and directed to good ends or bad ones under the varying influences of subsequent history, yet remained fundamentally the same even when external circumstances were completely altered. I shall take time to point out but one of the ways in regard to agriculture and one in regard to war in which it appeared to me that the land was exceptionally likely to make its inhabitants steady and persevering. I have referred in other connections to both of these already.

The first is the remarkable prevalence of cultivation upon terraces—the kind of cultivation in which patient steadiness is most plainly indispensable. Let a terrace

on the steep hillside be neglected for a single year, and soil will be washed away which it took many years to gather. Let it be neglected long, and its restoration becomes the next thing to impossible.

This element in the ancient productiveness of Palestine is one reason for believing that the country will never again be thickly peopled. The plains of Jericho and Gennesaret are desolate to-day; but the labour of a year might remove the jungle that has choked them, and some care in distributing their never-failing waters would soon make them as fertile as of old. On Esdraelon and the Mukhna the crops are scanty now, but I know no reason why well-directed labour should not make them plentiful once more. But how can the hillsides of Judah and Ephraim be clothed again with vines and olives? The winter rains of centuries have broken down their retaining walls and washed away every particle of soil. It appeared to me—though I admit that it is a guess without sufficient basis of observation—that the larger part of the crops of Palestine, when it was "a delightful land," must have been raised upon its terraced hillsides; and the productiveness of these it appears as if no force of nature can restore.

Now, it is not hard to see that men whose households depended upon the maintenance and careful irrigation of terraces, would learn to attend to small things, to look far forward, to be patient and steady, in a degree far greater than ordinary husbandmen.

Much the same applies to the methods necessary for defence. The land, as I have remarked already, was eminently defensible; and yet defensible only when there was thought and skill on the part of its defenders. And it could be best defended as a whole. No doubt. as I shall have to notice in the sequel, it may be divided into two or three great sections, each of them capable of separate defence. And that it is not impossible for separate cities in it to maintain an independent existence, is apparent from the fact that thirty-one distinct little kingdoms were subdued by Joshua. But, on the whole, the country has such a physical configuration as to be suitable for only one, or at most for a few, separate communities. It is not like Greece or Latium, where nature seems to have provided an acropolis for each little segment of territory, so as almost irresistibly to suggest that each should remain apart, sufficient for itself and but little caring about what happened to its neighbours. In the real home of Israel, the valleys twine and intertwine so as seldom to surround any position or make it fit for isolated defence. Thus there are but few of those separate hills commanding a considerable extent of country which have encouraged the erection of the independent strongholds which have played so important a part in the history of the Carnatic and the Deccan, in the history of the neighbouring Lebanon, and in that of the maritime plain of Palestine itself. Thus there was always danger and there might possibly be destruction to all, if a strong invading force once got foothold anywhere amongst the hills. It was therefore obviously wise for the whole nation, or at the very least for the whole tribe, to combine and to watch every hostile approach to any portion of their confines. And if this course was seen to be the wise one and was acted on to any extent, it is plain how it would encourage forethought, and patience, and mutual helpfulness, and willingness to make sacrifices for other than directly selfish ends and whatever else is included in a character of determined steadiness.

It is striking that both these features of the country reach their climax in that part of it whose inhabitants did in course of time become characterised by tenacity and perseverance such as no other people in the world's history has displayed. In the territory of Judah, nearly all the cultivation was on terraces;—the reason this why it is now the most desolate part of Palestine. Except in a few places, such as Bethlehem, where the terraces have been preserved, and at the heads of the valleys which run upwards from the western plain, the land is nothing but a waste to-day which was reckoned fit of old to send out its three hundred thou-

sand fighting men. It is the destruction of the terraces that has made this tremendous change. Besides, within the territory of Judah there is no single point that seems designed by nature to be the site of an independent stronghold. On its confines to the west, there are several positions of the kind; but these were held not by the men of Judah but by their enemies as outposts against them. On its northern boundary is Jerusalem, the very pattern of a hill-fort; while the mountain range further north affords such positions as the famous hill of Samaria, and the hill of Sanur which even in the present century was for more than a generation the seat of an independent principality. But it was only when defended as a whole that the land of Judah was a fortress. If so defended, it was as nearly as possible impregnable; but if an invader once had a firm military grasp upon even one of its hills or valleys, he could easily make his way to where he pleased. And therefore the men of Judah had early to learn to combine for their own defence. They had to watch every entrance to their country. They had to organize themselves so that every pass might be always guarded, if any single household was to enjoy the fruits of its labours unmolested. And thus—partly at least through the influence of the region that they dwelt in—the Jews developed that resolute, tenacious, steady character which made them the backbone of the Israelitish people, which enabled them to hold fast their nationality when every other tribe had lost it, and which even now, after millenniums of degradation and oppression, makes the Jew the most determined of mankind, the most certain to gain at last, in the face of every difficulty, whatever object he has set his heart on gaining.

I think I have said enough to show how well adapted the country of the Israelites was to cultivate those qualities of the perfect man that were set forth in the symbol of the Cherubim. It did cultivate these qualities in them to some extent. It might have done so to a much greater extent if they had been more apt and faithful scholars.

Probably the strongest impression made on me by my visit was this of the very special fitness of the land as it was of old for developing in the nation that possessed it those moral qualities which fit men to do great things—those moral qualities which were needed to enable them to fulfil the promise that stands on record as made to Abraham their founder, that "in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Others must settle how far my impression was correct. All I have undertaken is to tell the impressions actually made on me, not to determine how far such impressions are of value. But I am convinced that those who know the country well might carry this line of thought

much further into detail than I have tried to carry it. And if there be any truth in this line of thought, it is a singular confirmation of the belief, which rests on other and surer grounds, that it was part of the eternal purpose of Him who made the world and rules it, that from the least of all lands an influence should go forth which shall not cease to work until this blighted earth become God's "own fair world again."

## CHAPTER III.

## THE HOME OF FREEDOM.

Among the numberless works on Palestine, few are more widely known than one entitled The Land and It was a good idea, to weave together the Book. notices of Palestinian facts and customs and localities, in illustration of points that require explanation in the Bible as a whole. But there is need that someone should write a companion volume, which might be suitably called "The Land and the Story." Such a book should recount the history of Israel in the light that may be thrown on it by careful examination of the scenes of its events. Most of these scenes have been determined by the labours of Dr. Robinson and his successors; especially by the recent Survey of Western Palestine. They can be investigated to some extent even in the closet by the help of the large and admirable map published a few years ago by the Survey, on which the minutest features of the country are carefully laid down. What is needed now is that the topographical knowledge thus laboriously won should be applied to the records that survive. A work in which this was wisely done would cast light on

much that is still obscure, and—a thing more important still—would give freshness and vividness to narratives which their studied brevity, together with their archaic form, makes nine readers out of ten regard as an airy unreality, not as a matter-of-fact account of what was done by "men of like passions with ourselves." It would clear up many an allusion in the writings of the prophets, and help to make that lofty poetry speak of eternal truth to us with something of the intense and intimate relation to common life which it had for those to whom it was spoken first. It would thus do more than any other possible contribution to biblical literature to make men feel the essential unity of that scheme for the salvation of the world which culminated in Christ, and in the practical working out of which in our day the same laws and principles must hold good as were exemplified in its origin and growth.

It is true that not much can be gained by study of the ground in the way of illustrating the narratives in which the highest deeds that were done in Palestine have been preserved for men. The truths and the facts recorded in the Gospels are for the most part too grandly simple to be made plainer by any help of this kind. The teaching of Christ was, in the fullest sense, for all mankind. It was based, no doubt, on the previous history of the Jewish race, but had little connection with the mere outward features of the land they dwelt in. His parables and discourses may be understood anywhere; and if they often borrow an adornment from nature, it is from what in nature is most common, most universal. Not in Palestine alone, may wayside flowers serve to point the lesson, "Consider the lilies how they grow." In the New Testament, one moves in the region of spiritual ideas; and these, in their proper nature, have but little dependence on the surroundings amidst which they were first expressed in their completed form. So, the fully developed fruit may be carried far from the place where it was grown. With due care in transport, it may support life and yield enjoyment anywhere. The The case is different with the tree on which it grew. tree is fettered to its native spot. It is racy of its proper soil. It cannot be transplanted without danger to its life. Thus it is with the history and the poetry of Old Testament times. They rise occasionally to heights which foreshadow the universal truth that was to be; but, taken as a whole, they had a direct reference only to the land in which they sprang. Their meaning for mankind at large can be understood, and their interest can be fully felt, only when the country is considered side by side with them and when its features are remembered in detail.

When such a book as I have spoken of is written,—

and it will be written some day,—the history of the chosen race and the poetry for which it supplied the theme, will be seen, more clearly than they have been seen by anyone as yet, to be a priceless setting forth of the fundamental principles of divine government and of religion as it bears on actual life, and therefore to be for all men the best elementary introduction to all enduring joy and all moral and spiritual strength.

I am not vain enough to suppose myself able to write even a chapter in a book like this. My acquaintance with Palestine has done little more than make me feel the want of it. Nevertheless, I made some short stay at a few places not visited by every tourist, and observed certain of their features. And this enables me, I believe, to give some little indication of the line that should be followed. It enables me, at all events, to point to the vein which will yet be nobly worked by some one who adds to competent scholarship and sympathetic insight into social and historic life a minute acquaintance with the scenes which determined the course of the divinely guided yet perfectly human history of the Israelitish people.

The few places I could thus to some extent examine, derive their main interest from that long struggle with the Philistines which moulded the nation into the form in which it became important in the history of the world. The account of these places which I mean to

give will be fitly introduced by a chapter devoted to a brief survey of the origin of that struggle and of the conditions under which it was carried on.

The Philistines had their home in the southern portion of the maritime plain, where, unbroken save by an occasional hill, fit site for city or for castle, it stretched its vast expanse of corn-land between the hills of Judah and the Sea. They had never been subdued by Israel. In the first burst of the conquest they had lost some frontier villages with their lands; but these they soon regained, and in a century or so from the time of Joshua they had raised their country to as high a pitch of material prosperity as its narrow bounds permitted. They had grown rich by foreign trade. If not so civilised or wealthy as the similar coast-dwellers, the Phenicians, to the north, they were decidedly more warlike. Their cities grew till the country round could furnish no sufficient food for the swarming population. In such circumstances, they very naturally turned their arms against the tribes that held the highlands to the east. Impelled partly, perhaps, by the desire to take revenge for old defeats, partly by that earth-hunger which ancient nations regarded as a virtue and from which few modern ones are free, but mainly by the need for providing with occupation and food the multitudes whom wealth and trade had gathered in their land, the Philistines came

ere long to be engaged in almost incessant hostilities with Israel.

In that war there must have been battles, various in their issue, of which no record has survived. The general result is all we know. It may be thus summed up. The tribe of Judah, aided by the compact inaccessibility of its territory, was never quite subdued. It seems, however, to have soon submitted to the strict suzerainty of the Philistian commonwealth. It certainly held aloof from the struggle long maintained by its more patriotic neighbours to the north. The tribe of Dan, in spite of the wonderful successes in guerilla warfare which made their hero Samson famous, were pushed almost entirely from their seats; and, except in their offshoot, far north among the roots of Lebanon, played no part thereafter in the history of Israel. With Ephraim and its kindred tribes of Benjamin and Manasseh, then the centre of the nation's life, the struggle was long and hard; but at last, when Eli was High Priest and Judge, the Philistines gained a victory that appeared decisive, —that in which Hophni and Phinehas were slain and the Ark of God was taken. For twenty years from that fatal day, the central tribes of Israel passed completely under Philistine rule. Shiloh, the heart of the national life, the seat both of government and worship, was destroyed. Of the condition of the weaker tribes

to the north, and beyond the Jordan to the east, we are unaware. Probably, though a few clans and cities here and there may have preserved a precarious independence, they passed as a whole under the yoke of the Phenicians or the Ammonites, or of other states as hostile as the Philistines to all that was distinctive in the people of Jehovah. With Ephraim and Manasseh broken and enslaved and Judah quiescent and submissive, there was no hope of an independent national life for any part of Israel. The worship which reminded the nation of the duty for which they had been set apart, was in all likelihood prohibited by their masters. At all events it was neglected. The customs by which Israel was to be trained for the moral work it had to do for men, were falling rapidly into disuse. that distinguished it from other nations was on the point of passing away for ever.

The Philistines may not have been—in all probability they were not—very oppressive rulers, if judged by the standard of their times. It is known that they disarmed the Israelites as far as possible, and kept permanent garrisons in a few commanding situations. It is likely that they took away some portions of territory and imposed a heavy tribute on what they left. But beyond this there is nothing to show that they were cruel or severe. So far as appears from the narrative, the Ephraimites and their allied tribes might

have fared as well and spent their lives as comfortably as did the subjects of that European state which had most points of likeness to the city communities of the Philistines, in the

"Far times when many a subject land,

Look'd to the winged Lion's marble piles,

Where Venice sat in state throned on her hundred isles."

But if they had practically consented to any such arrangement, the shame would have been theirs, the loss would have been the world's. For it needed the help of freedom and the energy which freedom gives, it needed the help of a national life evoking feelings of patriotism to reinforce those of duty, before the moral and spiritual teachers of the nation were able to keep alive within it the truths which were its peculiar heritage. With all such helps, it was but feebly that they kept these truths alive through the generations that followed. Without these helps, the thing would have been impossible. The qualified independence still enjoyed by Judah was insufficient to supply the necessary energy, even had the men of Judah cared—as at that period they certainly did not-about discharging the high duties they had been chosen to perform. The group of tribes to the north, and those across the Jordan to the east, were too weak to stand alone. Even had they continued free, they also would have

mingled with the heathen and learned their ways. Had the Philistine dominion over central Palestine endured, the work which as matter of plain historical fact Israel has done for men must have been done by other hands than theirs, or have remained undone Even by the temporary duration of that for ever. dominion, the purpose which those who look back across the ages can easily see that the Ruler of the World had in view for Israel, was brought to the very edge of defeat. That purpose would have been defeated, had it not been for a man who has not, as it seems to me, been awarded his proper place in history. No doubt there is a certain tinge of dogmatism when one ventures upon broad statements of what might or might not have been if any single man had failed to act the part he did. But in the same sense, and with the same certainty, as we say that without Epaminondas, Thebes would never have risen to ascendency, or that without William, the Normans would never have conquered England, we may also say that Israel would have perished, and all hope of the accomplishment of the moral work it became the means of doing, would have perished with it, if it had not been for SAMUEL.

After twenty years of quiet submission, that youthful hero called the clans around his own town, Ramah of Benjamin, not in the first place to throw off the

foreign yoke, but to promise in public assembly that they would faithfully observe the customs and the worship which they admitted to be binding on them by the command of God. The issue proved how impossible it was in that age for any community to maintain peculiarities in belief or practice without a large amount of political independence. For the Philistine government determined at once to crush the movement which Samuel had originated. Their determination led to the battle of Ebenezer, by which the mountaineers of Benjamin were set free. The Philistines appear to have made but little effort to reverse this result. They were but a loose confederation of commercial towns, not easily roused to action save by motives of obvious self-interest; and the territory within which their rule had been cast off probably appeared to them scarcely worth an effort to retain. The possessions of Benjamin included indeed the fertile plain around Jericho and Gilgal; but to it the Philistine arms had probably never penetrated. The rest of the territory of Benjamin was, beyond comparison, the most rugged and unproductive portion of the land. So long as their sway was unquestioned in the rich valleys of Ephraim and Manasseh, so long as tributary Judah remained at rest, the Philistines could afford to be indifferent about what became of the rocks and thinsoiled glens of Benjamin. They acquiesced in the independence of the barren little canton, probably with something of the contemptuous indifference with which Rome at the summit of her power left the Scottish Highlands unsubdued.

Till far on in a protracted life, Samuel exerted without disturbance the influence he had won with the little community which he had been the means of setting free. The ordinary government remained of course in the hands of the elders and chiefs of its clans; but, in all matters of importance, these took counsel with their prophet and bowed to his authority. And his aim was to keep the tribe in the midst of which he dwelt faithful to their ancestral manners and beliefs—to revive in them the spirit and make them open-hearted to the hopes that had once borne sway in all the tribes of the united nation. His efforts were put forth mainly at local assemblies which he summoned annually at Bethel, and Mizpeh, and Gilgal, and at his own abode in Ramah. These places are all within the confines of Bethel and Gilgal, the most distant from Benjamin. one another, are only some sixteen miles apart. So small was the scale on which the national life of Israel had been as yet restored.

But such a state of affairs could not be permanent. If the Philistine government had had much political foresight they would have spared no pains to subdue their revolted province, as prudent conquerors have

always tried in such circumstances to do. To William, master of all that was valuable in England, the marshes around Ely were of little consequence in themselves. But if, by long and strenuous efforts, he had not crushed the principality which Hereward seemed at one time to be erecting among them, the English people would sooner or later have risen elsewhere, till the whole country had slipped from his grasp, or at the best remained a disturbed and insecure possession.

Such was the course of history in Palestine. the long quiet years rolled on, Samuel's influence extended; and his hopes that his whole people would be one day free, grew brighter. As the representative of the unforgotten national unity and freedom, he would have considerable influence with the chiefs of Ephraim; and it is known that in later years he wielded some power in Judah, tributary to the Philistines although it was. His sons were sent to represent him as far south as Beersheba; and it was on a personal visit to one of the cities of Judah that he finally resolved to give Benjamin a king and fixed upon the man who was to fill the office. In the narrative of that visit, it appears plainly how the men of Judah venerated Samuel, though it was only in the little independent territory that his authority was formally recognised.¹ Such double authority may perhaps seem

<sup>1</sup> Commentators involve themselves in difficulty and even absurdity by

strange. To the modern western mind, it looks incredible that the Philistines should have tolerated the exercise of any power within their empire by the head of a little community which asserted its independence, or that such power should have been submitted to by subjects of the Philistines who were yet not prepared definitely to rebel. It need not appear so strange to those who call to mind how representatives of ancient dynasties, such as the Rajah of Chandraghiri, exercised acknowledged power in the Carnatic for generations after it had submitted to Moslem rule. Even in our own day, mountain chieftains representing old political arrangements have at times exerted no little influence within the bounds of British India.

The first definite step towards the liberation of the entire nation was Samuel's somewhat reluctant consent to the election of a permanent military head,—in fact of a king,—who should be vested with power over all the clans that had shaken off the dominion of the

the perfectly gratuitous supposition that the interview between Samuel and Saul recounted in 1 Samuel chaps. ix. and x. took place at Ramah. Saul and his servant had wandered into the land of Judah. The person whose advice they wished to ask was the local seer of the unnamed town. It happened accidentally,—providentially,—that Samuel had come to the town immediately before Saul. When the two strangers asked for "the seer" they were naturally understood to mean Samuel. They were supposed to have come to the town because they had heard of the visit of the great Seer, in whose presence the mere local seer was regarded as of no account.

Philistines. Of the way in which the first king,— Saul,—was chosen and appointed, a full and interesting account has been preserved. Saul must have been known to Samuel from boyhood, for he was the son of the chief of the clan of Gibeah, the nearest village to the prophet's dwelling-place at Ramah, in fact only three miles distant from it. The old leader hesitated long before this step was taken, probably, as in such circumstances nearly always happens, from curiously mingled motives. There was the natural reluctance to retire into the background after he had wielded authority so long. There was fear lest the new appointment might prematurely awaken the suspicions and bring down the wrath of the imperial power. And it is hinted not obscurely that Samuel from the first had doubts as to the personal fitness of Saul for an office so high and so responsible. Doubtless he was well aware of his courage and skill in warfare, as well as of his nobility of feeling and generosity of disposition. But he had seen in him germs of self-seeking and self-will which were too fatally developed in the sequel. He doubted how far Saul apprehended the glory of the moral work which

<sup>1</sup>This is about the distance if Ramah and Gibeah were respectively situated at the modern El-Ram and Tuleil-el-Ful; and that the former identification is correct,—that El-Ram is the Ramah of Samuel—appears to me to be indisputable. But in no possible way of locating the two ancient villages can they have been more than six or seven miles apart.

Israel had to do for men, and how far he would aim with single heart at maintaining Israel's peculiar character. He feared lest the monarchy he moulded should turn out to be one of the ordinary type, aiming at no higher goal than worldly dominion and military sway. Only when convinced that higher aims had been awakened in him,—that, in the words of the record, he had been "turned into another man,"—did Samuel heartily take part in Saul's elevation.

The new government was brilliantly inaugurated. The town of Jabesh-Gilead across the Jordan had not yet yielded to any foreign power. Probably it was the last fragment of the old Israelitish commonwealth in those eastern regions. It had, however, been long invested by the Ammonites and was on the point of yielding, when the besieging force was scattered by an expedition organized by Saul, with Samuel's hearty co-operation. In this expedition, the little independent territory did not stand alone. Ephraim and Judah forgot their allegiance to the Philistines and felt for the moment as Israelites again. Saul is said to have been followed by three hundred thousand men of the northern tribes and thirty thousand of the men of Of course these numbers are but vague approximations; but they imply something like a levy en masse of Ephraim and Manasseh, as well as Benjamin, and the volunteering of a large proportion of the men fit for military service in the south.

The immediate consequence of this scarcely expected victory was the adoption of Saul as king by the victorious army—which plainly held itself entitled to represent the nation as a whole. The king of the single tribe which had won its freedom was now the king of Israel, so far as votes and acclamation could make him so. But he was no more king of Israel in fact than Bruce was king of Scotland when he was crowned at Scone, or Henry IV. of France when he was proclaimed before the walls of Paris. fighting was as necessary in Saul's case as in theirs, if he was ever to be in reality what he had now become in name. His enemies still held every portion of the realm that he claimed, save the territory of his own comparatively unimportant tribe and a few towns here and there like Jabesh.

It might, however, have been expected that the war of independence would at least have begun immediately. But, whether it was that the chiefs of Ephraim and Judah had been unaffected by the burst of patriotism and represented to the Philistine lords that the adhesion to Saul was a mere popular ebullition which would soon subside, or from whatever other cause, no war broke out immediately. For another year or more, Israel remained quiet and the

position was practically unchanged. Another policy must be followed, since there was no immediate sign of that general revolt which Saul and Samuel expected to begin as soon as the victorious volunteers had returned to their homes, and to head which they would for a time keep all the warriors of free Benjamin prepared. The new policy was to strengthen to the utmost the small portion of the land that had been liberated, and to wait for a favourable opportunity of calling all the rest to arms. It was the policy followed thirty years ago, with such brilliant success at last, by Cavour and Victor Emmanuel in Piedmont. In pursuance of this plan, three thousand chosen Benjamites were trained and kept ready to fight at a moment's notice. Two thousand of these lay under Saul at Michmash and Bethel near the northern frontier, and a thousand under his son, the still youthful Jonathan, at Gibeah, near the southern frontier of the little independent territory. So, for some brief interval, there was a pause in the current of events.

It may seem strange that all this time there was, so far as is known, no active interference on the part of the Philistines. It must, however, be remembered that for some fifty years they had had no trouble from their Israelitish subjects, except from the rude highlanders of Benjamin, whom they could afford

as they fancied, to despise. Their constitution, too, —one of at least five confederate and equal cities, —was little favourable to energetic action. Such confederations have always been as remarkable for slowness as they have sometimes been for obstinate tenacity. And besides, all our records tend to show that in the national character of the Philistines there was a certain heaviness and dulness which does something to justify the use in German university slang of "Philistinism" as a synonym for stupidity. At anyrate, for whatever reason, the imperial nation for a time gave little heed to what was going on among the hills. But when the Benjamites seemed bent on being regular soldiers, and no longer mere marauders. they felt that it was time to interfere. Even yet, they did not think it necessary to crush them summarily; but a strong position was seized, and an observing force stationed, at Geba, in the heart of the revolted territory. Geba lay right between Gibeah and Bethel, and commanded the valley across which communication was maintained between them. A strong garrison established there would destroy the nucleus of any army raised by Saul before Ephraim could support it by a general revolt. It would hold much of the scanty corn-land of Benjamin at its mercy, and so might deter its owners from joining Saul. The measure thus adopted turned out to be insufficient for its purpose, but in itself it was well devised.

Jonathan saw that now or never a blow must be struck for freedom. He moved from Gibeah, only about five miles distant, gathering, no doubt, the force of all the Benjamite clans from Mizpeh down to Gilgal, and stormed the post at Geba,—very possibly before the new intrenchments were complete. It was the signal for the rising that had been so long deferred. Judah still remained aloof, but the rest of the land was in commotion from end to end. Nor could the Philistines hang back. If such a challenge were not accepted, their empire would soon dissolve. The whole force of the confederacy took the field without loss of time. Israel was irrevocably committed to a life-anddeath struggle with the race that had held them in subjection for half a century. One cannot but be reminded of the struggles of other mountain lands for freedom—of Greece against the Persians, of the Swiss against the Austrians, of the Scots against the Plantagenets and England, of Sivaji and his Mahrattas against the might of the Moguls. To these later and more fully recorded contests, it is natural to turn for illustration when describing this one; and the parallels in some cases, the contrasts in others, are both remarkable and instructive.

I was able to visit the scenes of three of the chief

battles in the long war that began with Jonathan's exploit at Geba;—Michmash, the Valley of Elah, and Mount Gilboa. Each of these battles marked a turning-point in the struggle, and each of them illustrated some of the principles on which Israel was trained, and some of the moral ends to which its training was directed. For both reasons, each of them is pretty fully described by the historian of the times; and his descriptions grow even fresher and more vivid than I expected when they are studied on the ground.

I shall devote a chapter to each of the places I have named; but it will not be my aim to give a pictorial description of them. I have no skill in wordpainting; nor, even if I had, was the time I could spend at any of the three localities enough for the minute observation on which such painting, if it is to be accurate, must be based. My object will rather be to continue the narrative from the point to which I have brought it down,—only entering into greater detail regarding the events of which I was able to examine the scenes for myself. I shall try to show how even a slight acquaintance with the actual localities removes obscurities, and sometimes casts a light on the feelings and motives of the actors by means of which truths useful for men of every age and land can be clearly discerned by those whose inward eyes are open. But before the particular places are taken up,

it may be useful to form some general idea of the resources of the enemies who met in the battles that I am about to treat of.

The prejudice in favour of the Israelites that is natural on the part of Christian readers, must not blind us to the fact that the Philistines represented by far the higher civilisation. Their literature has perished. Scarcely anything is known about them except the little contained in the records of their foemen. Yet even that sets before us a picture that is in many ways attractive. They were skilled in the arts of life and advanced in civil government. Their armies were well disciplined and well armed. Their soldiers were patient and hardy. Their people as a whole were rich, yet seemingly not enervated by riches. In regard to discipline and weapons and military skill, there is no doubt that they were almost immeasurably superior to the Israelites. In particular, they possessed chariots and were skilled in using them, while the Israelites had none and could not have used them if they had. Now, in a war of that age, the possession of chariots by one side while the other side did not possess them, gave almost as great an advantage as the exclusive possession of artillery would in our day. When a force of chariots could be brought upon the field, it was seldom that its charge was not decisive. In all points bearing on civilisation generally, and particularly on

the arts of civilisation as applied to war, the Israelites were as much inferior as the Scots to the English when the great quarrel between the two countries was fought out, or as the Mahrattas to their northern foemen.

About the numbers available on either side, it is hardly possible to speak precisely. In the remaining records, numbers are not often given; and in some of the few cases where they are, errors arising from carelessness in copying or some other cause make it impossible to turn them to account. When the space which the tribes of Israel occupy on the map is compared with the little corner beyond which the homeland of the Philistines never stretched, or when the numbers registered in the census of the tribes are called to mind, one naturally thinks that no superior density of population would enable the rulers to set an army in the field at all equal in number to that of their revolted subjects. But this very natural supposition requires a twofold correction. On the one hand the whole force of Israel was at no time on the patriotic side. A large part of it was sometimes arrayed on the side of the invaders. Saul got no help from Judah

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Thus it is said in Sam. xiii. 5, that the force which the Philistines had on foot at the commencement of the war contained thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen. The latter number is probable enough. The former is a manifest mistake, but one which not even by a fortunate conjecture has it been found possible to correct.

till a late stage in the war, and even then got help from but a part of it; and though he doubtless got some from beyond the Jordan, that also was but small. The northern tribes seem to have done little or nothing throughout the struggle. Saul must have had at least a considerable party in Ephraim and Manasseh, but it was on Benjamin alone that he could confidently rely. No other tribe seems to have at any time supported him with its full force. On the whole it appears probable that the war of freedom was fought out by less than a quarter of the whole force of Israel, and that in its earlier stages not even this proportion was at the disposal of the patriotic party.

On the other hand, there are indications that the available military force of the Philistines was by no means exclusively native. Commercial communities like theirs have in all ages relied much on mercenaries. We might perhaps be as much mistaken if we estimated the available military force of the Philistines on the basis of the population of Philistia, as we certainly should be if we reckoned the armies that the Venetian government could send against a revolted dependency on the basis of the number of inhabitants in Venice. The Plantagenets, who had a large and warlike native population to support them, brought mercenaries from beyond the sea to strengthen the armies which they hurled continually on Scotland. It is pro-

bable that the Philistines did the same, at all events in the later stages of the conflict.

It is likely on the whole that in this great war the Israelites who followed Saul, if not so hopelessly overmatched as the Scots by the English, or the Greeks who stood for freedom by the Persians and their Greek supporters, were more so than the Swiss were by the Austrians, or the Mahrattas by the hosts of Aurangzib.

Of course the patriots had some advantages. Their country, as has been pointed out, was admirably adapted for a skilful and brave defence. In few places could the invaders employ their military superiority to the full, and in many parts the dreaded chariots would be entirely useless. They were nerved all of them, beyond doubt, by

"The strength that fills, The freeman battling for his hills;"

and they may have had something of a still higher strength arising from an assured conviction that they had a sacred work to do on earth in which their fathers' God, more powerful than all the might of all their enemies, would be upon their side. Such a conviction Samuel had certainly striven long and hard to impress on all. And probably it had taken hold on some few chiefs and warriors, who neither sought

nor have obtained any praise among men. It certainly wrought powerfully sometimes on the feelings of King Saul and habitually on the feelings of his high-souled son. But I find no proof that this conviction was very wide-spread, or was any great element of strength, until later years, when David had come upon the stage.

Altogether, the outlook of those who fought for freedom was anything but bright. The odds, in any human calculation, were terribly against them. was easy perhaps for the bulk of the patriots to rush to arms. The desire of revenge, the prospect of plunder, the hope of gloriously delivering their country, and a wild unregulated zeal for their ancestral ceremonies and laws may have filled the Benjamites and those from the other tribes who took their part with desperate and unrestrained enthusiasm. But it cannot have been easy for those who guided the counsels of the nation, and least of all for Samuel, to expose the fortune of Israel, with all the hopes for the world which they knew to be wrapped up with it, to such deadly They can have taken the final step only when satisfied that duty called them to risk all that they valued in the high places of the field, and only in the deep assurance, as Jonathan so nobly phrased it, that "there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few."

## CHAPTER IV.

## MICHMASH.

The die was cast. Israel was committed to a struggle for life or death with the Philistines, enormously superior as they were, in every element of material resource, to such fragments of the nation as Samuel and King Saul could hope to summon to the field. On the issue of that struggle the whole destiny of mankind hung. Of course we know not all the resources of the divine government; but, with our present light, it must appear that if Benjamin and those who took its part were crushed, there remained no hope of that moral life being preserved which Israel has been the channel of conveying to more recent ages, and which, if those to whom it is now intrusted are faithful as Benjamin was faithful in its time of trial, will yet gladden and strengthen all mankind. The condition of affairs that had lasted for some thirty years could never return—that condition of affairs in which Benjamin was free, was learning to some extent the lessons its prophet taught, and exercising an undefined but increasing influence on the still subject tribes around Israel, as a whole, must regain its national life, or it.

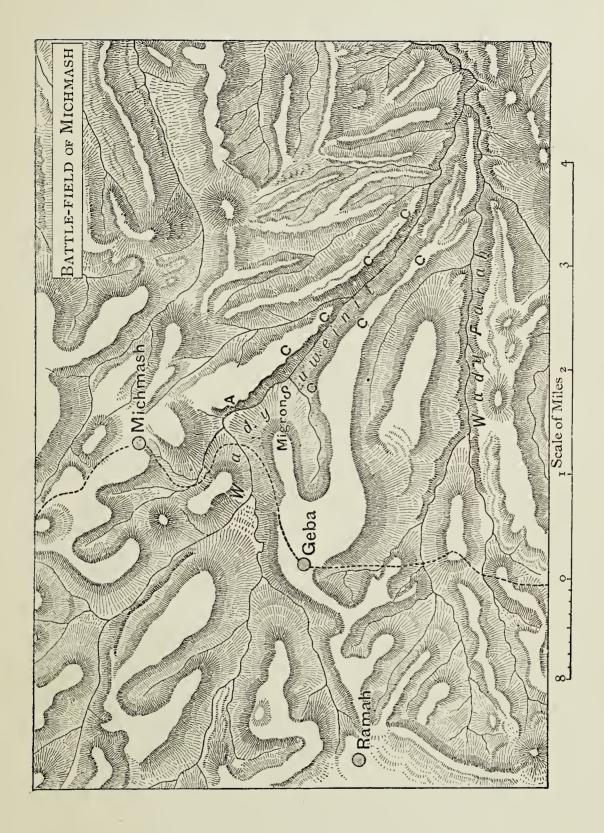
the fragment of it by which that national life had been hitherto preserved must be subdued entirely. After the lesson they had received, the Philistines could not consent to leave any rallying point for freedom in the land.

The first stage in the long struggle is related in the portion of the First Book of Samuel which extends from the fifth verse of the thirteenth chapter to the forty-sixth verse of the fourteenth chapter; and in what follows, I shall take for granted that this narrative is borne in mind.<sup>1</sup>

This stage in the struggle was closed by the events of which Geba and Michmash, on opposite sides of what is known now as the Wady<sup>2</sup> Suweinit, were the scene. I reached Geba, on the southern side of the Wady, one afternoon. That evening I walked slowly east, towards the Jordan, for between two and three miles along the edge of the valley, the depth of which gradually increases till it is somewhere about four hundred feet. I went considerably below the point where the banks, which at Geba are steep but grassy, become rocky and precipitous, and totally inaccessible

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Considerable difficulty arises to the reader of the Authorised Version from the way in which Geba and Gibeah are confused. In the Revised Version, the necessary correction has been made.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Wady is the Arabic word for a watercourse together with the valley, whether deep or shallow, through which it finds its way. Most readers will remember how the word was introduced by the Arabs into Spain, and is still preserved in such river names as the Guadiana, the Guadalete, and the Guadalquivir.





except here and there for a practised climber. Next morning, I partly rode and partly walked for a considerable distance along the bottom of the valley, in the direction of the very similar Wady Farah, which joins it on the right, running down by Anathoth on the south. I then retraced my steps to the place where the Wady Suweinit is crossed by the track between Geba and Michmash, and rode for three quarters of a mile up the steep, but not dangerous, or even difficult, ascent to the latter town. It was a brief and imperfect survey, but enough to throw some fresh light upon the narrative,—to which we shall now return.

Ephraim and Manasseh as well as Benjamin. Such garrisons as the Philistines may have had in the two northern tribes were doubtless driven out or massacred, or at least shut up within their defences. It appeared likely for a time that the summons to war which Saul at once sent out would be universally obeyed. The summons was that the force of all Israel should meet at Gilgal. At first sight it seems a strange place for a rendezvous,—a long day's march away from any place where a battle could be looked for. But since the destruction of Shiloh, Gilgal was probably the only place where anything that could be called national worship was carried on. It was certainly the chief sanctuary of the only tribe that had been liberated.

And the war was emphatically a holy war. It could be begun aright only in some place where Jehovah was statedly adored. And distant though it was from the sphere of operations, Gilgal had some compensating advantages of situation. It was the fittest place for the junction of such succours as might come from beyond the Jordan. And almost totally unprovided with proper weapons as the Israelites were, some little delay was necessary before they could proceed to an actual engagement.

Plainly, the plan of the projected campaign was to trust to those who remained at home for a stubborn defence of the passes and the towns,—then for the army organized at Gilgal to attack the invaders on the flank or rear when they were entangled among the hills.

But, for once, the Philistines seem to have acted with promptitude and decision. They took the field immediately, with a force which, though its exact strength cannot be ascertained, was evidently far more formidable than the Israelites had looked for. Then the weakness of mere popular impulse and the weakness of the material out of which the Benjamite leaders hoped to build up a nation of freemen, speedily began to show themselves. No sooner did the invading host appear than "the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait,"—sufficient proof of there having been as yet

no appreciable element of strength arising from the confidence which Samuel had, and his people should have had, in the aid and protection of Jehovah. The towns and passes were undefended. Of those who had not gone to Gilgal, some submitted to the Philistines and endeavoured to earn forgiveness by following them to the field against their countrymen who were still in arms. Some took refuge among rocks and jungles. Some hid themselves in cisterns. Some fled outright across the Jordan. Wherever the disciplined army of the Philistines appeared, organized resistance ceased. Saul's whole plan of campaign was ruined. Even those who stayed with him at Gilgal were dismayed and "trembling."

It is doubtless here that the explanation is to be found of Samuel's delay in arriving at the rendezvous to inaugurate the war. He had been using his influence with the men of Ephraim who were still at home. When their dismay began to show itself, it was his immediate duty to hearten them up if he could. Only when he was foiled in this, did it become his duty to join the faithful few who were still prepared to fight for their country and their God.

Practically unobstructed, the great army of the imperial power held upon its way. And the route which it followed is unmistakable. The important thing for the Philistine government was to hold Ephraim and

Manasseh to the allegiance in which for a moment they had wavered. With their old enemies of Benjamin, they could deal at leisure afterwards. If Ephraim were brought back into subjection, Benjamin could do them little harm. Therefore it was to the fertile and populous regions of the north that their army pro-That such was the direction of their ceeded first. march appears not only from the necessities of the case, but from the fact that we first hear of them at Mich-If the attack had been aimed at Benjamin in the first place, they would have come up into the hills by the Pass of Beth-horon, and then would either have attacked Mizpeh and Gibeah or have advanced on Geba, as the force destroyed by Jonathan had done. In either case, their operations would have been on the south side of the Wady Suweinit. The fact of their appearing at Michmash on its north side, shows that the main attack was directed against Ephraim. And that the army which encamped at Michmash had come to it from the north, is further clear from their sending out a party to spoil the country towards Bethhoron,1—the very district they would have crossed and ravaged by the way if they had come straight from Philistia to Michmash.

It is probable,—indeed to my mind it is certain,—that it was only a detachment of the great army that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sam. xiii. v. 18.

came to Michmash. The main body must have been operating in the north. The chariots, the arm in which the Philistines were strongest, would never be brought to Michmash. Not indeed that it would be impossible to bring them there, but when there they would have been almost useless. There is no ground within many miles that is flat enough and large enough for chariots to act on with effect. And from Michmash it would be impossible, except by a long and dangerous detour, to bring chariots over the great valley to operate round Gibeah and Ramah, where the strength of Benjamin lay. In a long subsequent age, Isaiah described the march from the north upon Jerusalem of the King of Assyria, whose host was as much mightier than anything the Philistines could assemble as the invaders of Russia under Napoleon were mightier than the host that was vanquished at Pultowa. Yet even the Assyrian is represented as laying up his baggage at Michmash that he might pass the deep Wady unencumbered. Thus the great country to the north was held by the main body of the Philistines and was settling down once more into quiet and hopeless submission, while a strong detachment was sent south to Michmash to deal with whatever resistance might still be made by Benjamin.

Meanwhile what of Saul and the men who, though "trembling," were still gathered round him at Gilgal,

below the heights on which the decisive struggle must take place? The new king was not the man to fail the few who were faithful still, or to desert the cause that he was pledged to. To the terrible disappointment of his plan this new embarrassment was added,—that, for seven days after the time agreed on, Samuel did not come to invoke the blessing of the Lord on those who were willing to die in order that Israel might live. At last Saul would wait no longer. He acted as prophet and as priest himself. He offered the accustomed sacrifices, and was just starting for the point of danger with such as were content to follow him when Samuel at length arrived.

It was the first open manifestation of that flaw in the character of the king which the old prophet had suspected from the first. Of course there are many excuses for what he did. He pleaded his own cause well.¹ Not one brave man in a thousand would have acted otherwise. But only the thousandth brave man who would have acted otherwise, was fit to be King of Israel in such a conjuncture of affairs. The one thing that gave dignity to Israel, the one thing that might afford them hope in their terrible extremity, was the special relation in which they stood to the God of all the Earth. Compared to securing the blessing of God

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xiii, vs. 11 and 12.

—and it was admitted by Saul and everyone that His blessing could reach men only through His appointed prophet—everything else was of no account. To the manifested approval of God on each step proposed, all considerations of prudence and military necessity (important though they were in their own secondary place) must be regarded as subordinate. Only one who recognised this could do the work which a true founder of the Israelitish Monarchy had to do —as in every work, whether great or small, it is only one who recognises to the full the conditions under which the divine rule would have it done, that can be in the highest sense successful. By elevating military considerations to the first place, Saul made plain that, brave and skilful and in the main true-hearted as he was, it was not in him to guide that people along the path marked out for them. And therefore Samuel all sorrowfully declared that Saul's kingdom should not continue.

But though unfit for the highest work of all, with a radical unfitness which in time grew as clear to others as it was already clear to Samuel, Saul had yet a great work to do for Israel and for mankind; and, if judged by ordinary standards, he right nobly did it. With only six hundred men in his little army, he moved up from Gilgal and took post at Geba,—in time, but probably only just in time, to prevent the enemy from

making their way south across the Wady. In the altered circumstances, this was the only course for a bold and devoted leader to adopt. To one who reads the history on the spot, it was as obviously right for Saul to defend Geba as for the Greeks to defend Thermopylæ against Xerxes. Ephraim and Manasseh were already lost through the flight or submission of those who should have fought for them. Northern Benjamin could no longer be defended. A few of its rocky fastnesses might be held, and doubtless were so; but, with a strong detachment at Michmash, the foe had the whole of the open country at his mercy. But invasion might still perhaps be rolled away from southern and south-eastern Benjamin,—some two hundred square miles of country, the greater part of it a mere rocky wilderness. In the face of a resolute even if a scanty band at Geba, which completely commands the road from Michmash to the south, the Wady Suweinit would be hard to cross. If driven thence, the patriots might find a similar though less strong position in which to defend the line of the Wady If that were forced, there were rugged passes Farah. beyond it, in which a stand might be made before the foe could arrive at Gilgal. And if these also proved too weak, at least the last free Israelite might die beside his people's earliest sanctuary, and be saved from beholding the final extinction of the hopes by

which the united nation had been fired when, on that same spot, it first encamped upon the sacred soil. It must have been with little hope of any other end than this—especially after Samuel's rebuke—that Saul and his forlorn hope marched up to Geba.

But it must not be supposed that these six hundred were the only Israelites who remained in arms. Samuel was now at Gibeah, less than four miles in the rear, and was no doubt straining every nerve to rouse the spirit of the clans around it. The little band at Geba was enough to watch the enemy for the time. If the signal were given that an advance from Michmash had begun, some thousands would reinforce it soon. Some Benjamites too would be on guard in the strongholds beyond the Wady, though cut off for the time by the advance of the invaders,—some at least in Rimmon, so memorable in the history of the tribe.<sup>2</sup> And nearer hand there were still other Israelites not less eager for the fray, and not less usefully employed, than those who had taken post at Geba. They were those garrisoning the caves in the immediate

That is, if Tuleil-el-Ful be the site of Gibeah, as is commonly supposed. This is an identification with which I must say that I am not entirely satisfied. Of course, one who merely spent half an hour on the spot, has no right to have any strong opinion on the subject. And for my present purpose the question is not important. Whether Gibeah was exactly at Tuleil-el-Ful or not, it must have been within a couple of miles of it. It may have been nearer Geba than I have said. It can hardly have been further away.

2 Judges, Chaps. xix. xx. xxi.

neighbourhood. The significance of their presence there escapes most readers. Certainly it escaped me until I saw the field of battle for myself. It escapes notice because nowadays we so little associate caves with the idea of any calculated military operation. To us, retreat into a cave suggests nothing but an attempt to hide one's self. We do not think of caves as fortified places from which an active defensive warfare may be waged. Yet such they were in Palestine. Down to times more recent by many centuries than those of Saul, caves played the same part there as castles played in European mediæval warfare. The part of his army that held a well-connected series of castles was anything but lost to a general who was defending his country from invasion.

Now there is a line of fortified caves on both sides of the Wady Suweinit. They begin a little below the point where its sides become precipitous,—that is, less than a mile below the place where the road crosses it. I do not know how far they extend. I went far enough to see several, but entered only one. And that one gives but little idea of what the others were or are; for it has been opened out,—I should think in very recent times,—so as to serve the purpose of a sheepfold. Its whole front has been knocked down and access for ordinary people to its upper rooms cut off. There are, however, upper rooms in it. But

I was told, through my dragoman, by a shepherd whom we found upon the spot, that there is only one boy in the neighbourhood who has ever visited them. I saw the way by which the boy went up, and saw not only that I could not make use of it now, but that it is beyond any power of climbing that I ever had. All the other caves have very narrow entrances and must have been practically impregnable. They are said to contain several chambers, each easy enough of access from within. Each could accommodate a considerable garrison. I regret that I did not examine these caves thoroughly. They are not so much as mentioned in any guide-book I possessed. Before I knew of their existence, my tents and mules had been some hours upon the way and were beyond recall, and accordingly I somewhat reluctantly went I suppose, however, that I should have profited but little if I had examined the caves. I have not the skill, or the kind of information, necessary for making a reasonable guess as to their age. Perhaps no one knows enough about Palestinian archæology to say authoritatively which of them are as old as the time of Saul. But that some of the caves—castles we ought to call them if we wish to remind ourselves of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>I had indeed seen the openings into some of the caves the night before from the top of the rocks, but had failed to attach importance to them, thinking they were mere single cells, probably the work of anchorites in Christian times.

their real function—existed then, and were held by the patriots in their stand for freedom, will not be questioned by one who reads the narrative on the spot. They played an important part in all that followed. For one thing, they effectually blocked the Wady Suweinit, the only direct path from Michmash to Gilgal and the plains of Jordan. No force, however strong, would venture into such a perilous defile while its fastnesses remained untaken. They were also near enough to threaten a force moving south from Michmash. Their garrisons might attack its left flank while those posted at Geba threatened its right.

Thus, weak as Saul's army was, it held a position which was for a time as impregnable as the position at Thermopylæ. For some days, perhaps for many, the Philistines were held at bay. Less confident than Xerxes in mere numbers, their leaders made no attempt to force a passage. One weakness Saul's position had; and of that they meant to take advantage in due time. Like that of Thermopylæ, it might be turned by a detour upon its left; and in this case no traitor Ephialtes was needed to show the way. The way was broad and open. A strong detachment moving round the top of the Wady Suweinit and coming down by Ramah, would meet with scarcely any obstacle. If his scouts once reported that such a force was well upon its way, Saul and his little

band would have had only the alternative of falling where they stood, like Leonidas and his comrades, or retreating upon the Wady Farah, thereby surrendering a good half of the little territory which was the last refuge of their freedom. And a detachment could soon be spared from the great army in the land of Ephraim. When things there had quieted down, it would be easy to make an end of Benjamin without the waste of life that must result from even a successful attack on such a strong position. In the meantime, it would be wisest to make full use of the advantage gained already. Thus, after some days' delay, which served to convince them that an immediate attack on the line of the Wady Suweinit was inexpedient, the generals at Michmash resolved effectually to ravage the part of Benjamin that was in their power.

Besides gratifying ancient enmity, this course promised several advantages. It might induce some Benjamites still in arms to submit, in the hope that perhaps even yet their homesteads might be spared. It might tempt the defenders of Rimmon and its neighbour fastnesses to descend into the plain, and might result in these fastnesses being taken. Perhaps it might even tempt Saul to try an assault on Michmash when most of the army was away from it. If it had this effect, no Philistine could doubt that the war would be ended at a blow. The ravaging

was therefore to be done thoroughly. On an appointed morning, three large detachments were to set out from Michmash, to burn the houses, to destroy the crops, and cut down the fruit-trees throughout northern Benjamin. One was directed on Beth-horon to the west, one on Ophrah to the north, and one to the east along the country lying to the north of and above the Wady Suweinit. But a precaution had to be taken. No one was likely to interfere with the first company of spoilers or the second. But the third would be in somewhat dangerous proximity to the cave fortresses in the Wady. Trouble, perhaps even danger, might arise, if the men dispersed in the work of devastation were suddenly attacked by a sally from the caves. Like good generals, the commanders at Michmash would guard against this contingency. Therefore, before the devastation was to begin, they stationed a body of troops—probably not a large one—at the passage of Michmash, that is, at the place where the valley contracts and its precipices begin, about a mile from their head-quarters in the This outpost would meet any movement from the defile below and either drive back those who made it or give time to the spoilers to concentrate in their own defence. The scheme was well devised. It was thwarted only by an act of daring that could not have been foreseen—by one of those heroic yet prudent exploits which faith in a living God has often suggested to single-hearted men.

On the morning fixed for the devastation, when the spoilers were just beginning their work in the immediate neighbourhood, Jonathan and his armourbearer went secretly down into the valley below Geba, as if upon their way to the fortified caves. It is open to question whether there were only two men in the little party. The ordinary forms of language will permit us to suppose that in mentioning Jonathan the historian intends to include the small body of personal attendants without which it was matter of course in those days that the son of a chief, not to say of a king, seldom moved abroad. There is no question that the writers of the Old Testament often adopt this common usage. Perhaps it is more likely that on this occasion Jonathan had none of his customary attendants with him except his armour-bearer, or aide-de-camp, as he would be styled in modern phrase. His expedition was meant to be a secret one. If his ordinary attendants were left at Geba, those who saw them would suppose that he was somewhere about the post himself. But the point is one on which it is impossible to be certain. Jonathan's path led him along the foot of the rock on the top of which was the Philistine outpost. This rock rises so abruptly that, unless there were a sentinel on its very edge, he might have passed down the bottom of the valley unobserved. This, however, was no part of his plan. At the narrowest part of the ravine, between the rocks called Bozez and Seneh, he held so high along the southern side that the enemy would be sure to see him. By their conduct when they did so, he meant to regulate his action. For faith in God and hope of help from Him, had made Jonathan as prudent as he was brave. If the enemy showed no sign of descending to attack him, the plan he had formed was to be carried out. If on the contrary they sent a party down, some other plan, which as events turned out was not required, would most likely have been resorted to. For I do not think he would in any case have returned to Geba without attempting something, or that he was yet at the end of his resources.

It is not difficult to see the appropriateness of the sign by which Jonathan intended to be guided. If he had his ordinary attendants with him, the little party would be regarded by the Philistine outpost as a reinforcement for the garrisons of the caves. If it consisted of but two men literally, these men would be regarded as messengers sent to arrange some concerted movement against the band of ravagers close at hand. In either case, it was important to cut them off. If no attempt to do so was made, it would show that the outpost on watch against the garrisons was either not strong enough or not sufficiently on the alert to

act with vigour. In that case, it would be in a fit condition to be taken by surprise. If the outpost merely challenged him to attack them, he would take them at their word, little as they supposed that an attack was possible on a post which they regarded as inaccessible. Exactly thus the event turned out. When the Benjamites below were seen, the outpost was content to scoff at them:—"Behold the Hebrews come out of the holes where they had hid themselves;"—and to challenge them to attack them if they dared. Jonathan and his follower, or followers, crossed the valley, disappearing, on account of their closeness to the precipice, from the view of those above; who, if they took the trouble to look after them at all, would expect to see them next some little way down in the direction of the caverns. Thus concealed from view, Jonathan climbed up on hands and knees, and his armour-bearer climbed after him. The conditions of the ground are so rigid, and the places where there is any possibility of ascent so few, that brief examination would easily determine the exact spot where Jonathan climbed up. There are few omissions in my tour which I regret so much as that I did not make the necessary examination.

Of course Jonathan knew exactly where he was going. These rocks are less than five miles from Gibeah, where all his boyhood had been spent. They

are the nearest rocks to it except those of the Wady Farah. He must have been—not more, as I believe, but—far less active and enterprising than ordinary boys, if he had not climbed every rock in that neighbourhood many a time. In search of nests, or in mere sport, he had often taken the same way to the top before. And scarcely out of boyhood as he was, he went up lightly and familiarly now where the mere lowlanders at watch upon the summit would not believe it possible for a human being to ascend. armour-bearer was probably as well acquainted with the rock as he was himself; for he would certainly be chosen from among the companions of his youth. To the spot where a few years before they had climbed as boys together, challenging each other, we may be sure, as to which could climb more boldly, the two came together now to venture their lives for God.

I suppose that no man since the world began has been privileged like Jonathan to use his boyish sports so directly and so gloriously for the salvation of his country and in the service of the Lord. So unique an honour was well-befitting for him who carried the instinctive nobility of early years to the close of a crowded if not a lengthened life,—for him who, with generosity too rare in boyhood but almost never exemplified beyond it, regarded one whom every selfish consideration tempted him to envy as his sure sup-

planter with a love that was "wonderful, passing the love of women."

A minute or two brought Jonathan to the top. Attacked from behind, by how many they could not tell, and by men who seemed to them to be rising from the earth, the Philistine outpost was in confusion in a moment. Some twenty were struck down almost without an effort at defence. The rest as they fled would soon be met by a sally from the caverns, the garrisons of which would be kept on the alert that morning, if by nothing else, by the neighbourhood of the outpost that was watching them. Thus, whatever his original following may have been, Jonathan before many minutes had elapsed found himself at the head of a considerable force. He led that force at once against the nearest company of spoilers, dismayed as they were already by the sudden and unexplained irruption of the fugitives from the outpost. Little defence would be made by them. The whole company of spoilers "trembled" and fled towards the camp at Michmash. The ravaging parties to the west and north had not yet advanced so far as to be out of They saw that there was some onset which their comrades had scarcely resisted for a moment. It must be something as terrible as unlooked for. Dismay and confusion spread fast among them, and, each man for himself, they also fled towards the camp. Soon all within Michmash and around it was a scene of wild disorder, in which no man could distinguish friend from foe. The charges of the compact if not numerous band led on by Jonathan, would frustrate the efforts of the Philistine commanders to get their troops in hand. Soon, too, the Ephraimites who had been forced into the Philistine ranks threw off the mask and seconded the efforts of their countrymen. And ere long another and decisive influence was brought to bear upon the struggle.

The confusion among the enemy had been at once observed by Saul, whom their various movements that morning had drawn out from Geba to the very lip of the valley, lest these manœuvres might be meant only to mask an attack on his position. For we find him at this stage "in the uttermost part of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree which is in Migron." No pomegranate stands there now, but the whole lie of the ground points out the exact spot with certainty. Saul at once got his force in order. The absence of Jonathan was ascertained, and some hopeful light thus cast on what was happening. But Saul's duty in the face of so vastly superior a force was still by no means clear. If he moved across the valley to take advantage of the confusion of the enemy, his position must be left undefended for a time; and even a fragment of the large array in front of him might seize

it and ruin everything. As was right in such a doubtful case, he took the authorised and customary way to procure divine direction. But before an answer came, circumstances made his duty plain. The confusion beyond the valley increased so as to make it practically certain that no attempt on Geba would be made. When ordinary providence makes duty clear, it is not only needless but wrong to ask for special guidance. And so his resolution was quickly Sending word, no doubt, to the forces in his rear to advance on Geba and act as circumstances might call for, Saul, with every man he had, plunged into the valley and across it. Some fifteen minutes would be ample to bring these active warriors, on fire with hope and mad for vengeance, into the midst of their disordered foes. And now the issue of the struggle was in doubt no longer. The Philistines were driven from the field. The battle passed over by Beth-Aven, away to the north-west among the hills. Then, when the crest of the ridge was gained, the flight turned south-west toward Philistia as far as the valley of Aijalon. For some sixteen miles in all, the beaten enemy was pursued and slaughtered.

But we are not concerned to follow out the story when its scene shifts from the locality that I was able to examine. Suffice it to say that the victory of the Benjamites was great, and would have been greater

still, but for Saul's rash impetuosity and that tendency to regard military success as everything which so fatally marred his work and dimmed his glory.

My account of the battle is illustrated by the accompanying map of the Wady Suweinit and the country round it. The greater part of what is shown in this and the other sketches in the volume has been derived, with but little modification, from the large map published by the Survey of Palestine. important work exhibits the features of the country in such detail as enables the careful student to learn nearly as much about the lie of the ground, and all else that illustrates a battle-field, as he could learn from a visit to the spot. In the present sketch, the dotted line shows the track,—it cannot even by courtesy be termed a road,—by which one travels north from the commonly accepted site of Gibeah to Geba, then cross the Wady Suweinit up to Michmash, and on towards The configuration of the country Ai and Bethel. makes it certain that the present track is on the exact line which the Philistines would have followed into Southern Benjamin if their invasion had been suc-I have inserted Migron on my own responsi-There cannot be a doubt that the name denotes the extremity of the ridge on which Geba stands. eastern extremity of the ridge is separated by a flat ledge of no great breadth from the lip of the valley,

along the side of which the track slopes steeply. This ledge affords standing ground, from which defenders might most advantageously assail a force climbing laboriously upward. The Passage of Michmash, which was occupied by the Philistine outpost, is marked A upon the sketch. The letters c show approximately the position of the caves which have been cut in the rocky and almost perpendicular sides of the Wady. But I do not profess that these letters show either the number or the exact position of the fortress-caves.

I believe that for one who masters the features of country shown in the map, enough has been said to make the original narrative absolutely clear, and enough to show that Michmash is one of the most picturesque and interesting battles of which history preserves a record. And it is one of the most important. No doubt its scale was small if it be placed beside the fights for freedom at Bannockburn and It is also true that only a detachment of the great invading army was defeated, and that not by any means the whole of Israel was set free, at Michmash. What effect the battle had on the Philistine forces employed in Ephraim we are not informed. Perhaps they made a leisurely retreat. It is more likely that they held their ground till the northern tribes were reduced to order. In spite of what they would term the unimportant check at Geba, the Philistine government may have been fairly content with the results of their invasion. They had re-established their authority in the only territory they deemed worth holding. Of the Benjamite leaders, though temporarily successful in the irregular warfare of the hills, they perhaps allowed themselves to speak with as much contempt as Aurangzib did of Sivaji when he termed him "the mountain rat," or as the contemporary English historians of William Wallace, for whom they could find no more complimentary epithet than quidam famosus latro, "a certain notorious robber."

But historical events, whether battles or whatever else, require time before their full effects appear. Such a victory showed what Israel could do. Once at least, the disciplined array of their foemen, though overwhelmingly superior both in numbers and equipment, had been swept like chaff before the wind; and that when the cause of freedom seemed lost beyond recovery. In the darkest day of the long and bitter war, this was something to look back on. What had been done once might be done again. Thus, after Bannockburn Scotland was unconquerable. She still had terrible disasters to pass through. After Halidon Hill and Pinkey, her prospects were as gloomy as they ever had been or could be. But the people who had driven to flight and irrecoverable ruin the

mightiest host that England with her untold superiority in civilisation, and discipline, and wealth, could send against them, was a people that never need despair. Thus those faithful to God and country in Israel must have felt, amid the deepest gloom which followed, that despair was not for those who could call to mind what had been done at Michmash.

By this battle the freedom of the one small mountain tribe was secured, and a foundation thereby laid for the freedom of every other. Similarly, it was by slow degrees, it was only canton by canton, that Switzerland became free. And as at Michmash so also at Morgarten, it was but a portion of the invaders that was defeated. Yet Morgarten is celebrated by all the Swiss, and celebrated rightly, as the birth-day of their freedom. Benjamin and its victory were for Israel, and for the benefit to the world which has come from Israel, all that the men of Schwyz and their victory have been for Switzerland. The freedom of Benjamin secured at Michmash, led, through long years of conflict, to the freedom of all its kindred tribes; exactly as the freedom of Schwyz secured at Morgarten led, after much greater lapse of time, to the freedom of all the Confederated Cantons.

One difference in the result deserves some notice before we leave the scene of Saul's first great victory. The European republicans have taken to themselves,

and the world has given them, the name of those who led them on to freedom. Why is it that the commonwealth which would never have had a being but for Samuel and Saul, is not known to history as the Benjamites, when the Alpine cantons are known as the Swiss? In part no doubt it is because the work done at Michmash revived an ancient nation rather than gave birth to a new one, and because Samuel, if not Saul, wished his race to bear in mind the high vocation that was enshrined in the name of Israel. But in part it was for another reason, to which there attaches a melancholy interest. The men of Schwyz retained the lead which priority of effort gave them. were faithful throughout to the cause for which they took up arms at first. Therefore the other communities, as they joined them, were proud to be known by their The citizen of Berne, though Berne be much greater in comparison with the small rude parent canton than Ephraim or Judah by the side of little Benjamin, is as proud of the name of Switzer as the descendant of those who triumphed at Morgarten. But in Benjamin, the evil of which we have already had to note the germ, developed as years went on. We shall see, in connection with the localities of which I have still to speak, how Saul and his tribe were morally damaged by success. We shall see how, bravely as they always fought, they fought not single-heartedly

to make the nation free to do its appointed work for God and for mankind, but quite as much to win honour Their work was done, and dominion for themselves. but done in so mixed a spirit that it needed to be done And it was done again by a tribe and by a leader who, with faults peculiar to themselves, were yet ever sensible that it was work for God that they were doing,—who in all they did had a resolute grasp on the true purpose of their national life to which Benjamin and Saul were strangers. Therefore the only tribal name which competes for general acceptance with the ancient designation of the people, is the name not of Benjamin but of Judah. History calls that people Israel, but about as commonly it calls them by the name of Jews, or men of Judah. And the name of Benjamin is but little honoured even by the devoutest student of those records of the past. It needs an effort for any one to bear in mind the undeniable and undoubted fact that Benjamin was the parent of the freedom, and therefore of all the glory and all the usefulness, of It is an instance of how, by the very names it teaches us to use, History occasionally reveals the moral worth of communities and of men, thus faintly and brokenly preluding to the full orchestra of the judgments of Eternity.

## CHAPTER V.

## ELAH.

In illustrating Israel's War of Independence from such topographical observations as I was able to make for myself, I have traced the main results of the victory at Michmash. It secured the freedom of Benjamin; but it probably left Ephraim and the tribes dependent on it, or by far the larger part of them, still subject to the Philistines. But if in subjection, they were not easy under it. The patriotic party among them would be ready to move on any favourable opportunity. Benjamin and Saul would be ready to support any movement they might make. Certainly, after Michmash, there was no approach to settled peace in any part of the northern dominion of the Philistines. Of course there was not a systematic war of the Roman or the modern type. Every now and then, some Ephraimite clan would refuse the customary tribute, or, when it got the chance, cut off some party of the enemy. Every now and then, some small Philistine garrison would be suddenly assailed,—successfully or unsuccessfully as the case might be. At Bethel or at Rimmon, expedi-

tions would often be organized to carry help to those who struck for freedom. The Philistines would often send reinforcements to their garrisons, without any general levy of the forces of the state or any invasion on a grand scale. Their government would hope against hope that the agitation would subside in course of time. Many of the chiefs of Ephraim would sway from side to side, giving aid now to the Philistines and now to the Benjamites, as each seemed the stronger for the time. It was like the war which the Mahrattas maintained, for some years before and after the death of Sivaji, at such times as the Mogul army was not actually in the field. It was like the war in which, for six years after the defeat of Falkirk, the Scots held the armies of Edward at bay, or like that in which, during the eight years that followed Halidon Hill, they wrested their southern lands, valley by valley and post by post, from the grasp of their ancient foes.

We do not know how long this state of war without regular battles or systematic invasion lasted, nor have any details in the history of the struggle been preserved. The records do no more than summarise its general results. The power of Benjamin and its king was steadily on the increase. The boundaries of the little kingdom were steadily enlarging. By and by, it became strong enough to

attack other nations than the Philistines, and to succour the tribes of Israel which these other nations, not the Philistines, held down. Benjamite expeditions, shared in of course by whatever portions of the northern tribes had freed themselves from the foreign yoke, were sent at different times against the Moabites in defence of Reuben, against the Ammonites in defence of Gad, and against the Syrians in defence of the tribes of the distant north.

After years of unintermitted and, upon the whole, successful warfare, a still more important step was taken by Samuel and Saul. It seems that all this time Judah, much the greatest of the tribes now that Ephraim was divided against itself, had remained at rest. We have seen how, while retaining a kind of subordinate independence, it acknowledged the Philistines as over-lords. But over-lordship is always held to imply protection. Now, effectual protection the Philistines were unable to afford, on account of the steady drain on their resources caused by the confusion that followed their defeat at Michmash. particular, the southern border of Judah was being relentlessly laid waste by the Amalekites, a race of plunderers from the desert, between whom and Israel there was the bitterest hereditary hatred. The tribe might have repelled these incursions for itself if it had fully organized and used its warlike power; but any

attempt to do so would at once have awakened the suspicions of the paramount authority. Judah was in such circumstances that it could neither protect itself nor obtain protection from those whose dominion it did not venture to cast off. It was exactly such an opportunity as those who directed the energies of Benjamin desired. They were glad of the chance to show that what the Philistines could not do for their subjects, free Israel both could and would do for their kinsmen. At Samuel's suggestion, the king called out all his strength to destroy the Amalekites and succour Judah. If his expedition were successful, the natural result would be that Judah also would join in the revolt against the Philistines. But the chiefs of Judah were in a strait. It would be madness to reject the powerful aid held out to them, or to refuse to Saul a passage through their territory. Yet, by accepting such aid, they would be certain to incur the anger of the Philistines. Their indecision is clearly shown by the fact that a contingent from Judah did follow Saul against the Amalekites; yet that it was ridiculously small when compared either with what such a tribe could easily have done, or with the host that came from the now independent north.1

The expedition was completely successful in a military point of view, and successful also in leading

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel xv. 4.

Judah, or at all events a part of it, to cast in its lot with Benjamin. It was not the southern clans of the tribe, however, though these had profited most by the destruction of the Amalekites, that yielded to the patriotic impulse. Only the northern part of Judah seems to have been ready to join King Saul. There, as pointed out in a former chapter, Samuel had long exerted considerable influence. There, too, the foremost place was held by a family which had been long distinguished for more than ordinary attachment to the customs and the faith of Israel. It was the family of Bethlehem, sprung by the most direct descent from the founder of the tribe, and whose chieftain at the time of the settlement in Canaan was the acknowledged prince or leader of all the clans of Judah. Of this clan of Bethlehem, the chieftain during the Benjamite war was the aged Jesse. With him and his house, Samuel was already in direct relation. The prophet had consecrated his youngest son, David, to the special service of Jehovah; though to what particular kind of service neither David nor the household were probably as yet aware.2 And the old man's sympathies were clearly shown by his having permitted that same son David to be, at least occasionally, a member of the household of the Benjamite king.3

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Numbers ii. 3 and Ruth iv. 18-22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel xvi. 1-13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel xvi. 14-23.

When the time of trial came, the old chief, though unable to take the field himself, sent out the three eldest of his sons, no doubt with the full strength of his clan to back them.

It seems as if some time elapsed before the Philistine Government made up their minds openly to resent the half-expressed alliance into which Judah, or such part of Judah as followed the lead of Bethlehem, had entered with their enemies. No doubt there were embassies and negotiations before they came reluctantly to the conclusion that they must show their strength if they were to keep Judah within But it came to this at last. The full their empire. force of the Philistines took the field, probably for the first time since the great expedition that had been partly foiled at Michmash. But long years of fighting, and for the most part of success, had heartened up the men of Israel. Invasion carried with it no such terrors as it had done at the commencement of the There was no cowering now in cisterns or in jungles, no fleeing across the Jordan, no "trembling" among such as would not flee. The Philistine levy was met by a levy as universal on the part of those who had won their freedom or who hoped to win it now.

The march of the invaders was directed against northern Judah—in which the revolt had definitely begun. If they once brought it back into subjection,

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they might hope to advance by a route hitherto untried, and to crush at last the little upland canton which had so persistently defied them. But through the new spirit and new hope at work in Israel, they were met, almost on the frontier of the revolted territory, by a force that was sufficient to bar their way. There is no remaining notice of where the exact boundary between the Philistine homeland and the territory of Judah was in those days. The first low range of hills that skirts the plain was pretty certainly either inhabited by Philistines or held by their frontier posts. Through the passes of this range, the invaders marched unchallenged. Beyond them, the valley known now as the Wady-es-Samt affords an easy passage for five or six miles further. Once in the open portion of that valley, the invaders were close on the revolted district. The villages on the heights that lie along it to the north, and those that look down it from its eastern end, belonged to the part of Judah that was determined to be free. So long as the Philistines kept to the broad corn-lands of the valley, it would have been folly to attack them. There was no better ground for their chariots in Palestine. For Saul to meet their disciplined array on exactly such a field of battle as they would themselves select, would have been a wilful casting away of the advantages which nature and providence had given him. He was

guilty of no such folly. He placed his army on the edge of the valley as skilfully as he had done at Geba.

What followed is related at considerable length in the passage of the First Book of Samuel which extends from the beginning of the seventeenth chapter to the end of the ninth verse of the eighteenth. As in the last chapter, I shall take for granted throughout this one that the original narrative is familiar to my readers.

Unlike the accounts of the earlier battle, this narrative is perfectly intelligible without personal examination of the ground. At Geba, the sight of the actual locality both corrected some erroneous ideas for me, and led me to form ideas that were entirely new. At Elah, my observations did little more than confirm the impressions received from the narrative long before. At the same time, I am not sure that the impressions which the narrative has always left on me are the same it leaves on readers generally. Perhaps my account of this battle will appear strange to some who have been acquainted with the Book of Samuel from childhood. Yet I am convinced that anyone who studies the story on the spot, comparing it point by point with the scene spread out before him, will come to conclusions not materially different from If I am mistaken on any point, it is not from want of acquaintance with the place. I reached it one evening a little after sunset. I had hoped to have an

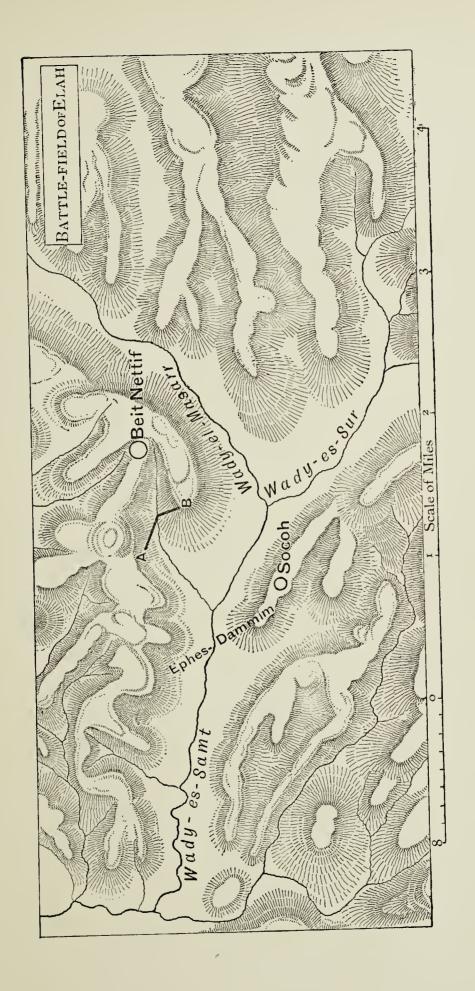
hour or two of daylight after arriving; but the village of Beit-Nettif, the nearest to the undoubted scene of the battle, proved rather difficult to reach. It is perfectly well known, but a long way off the beaten track of tourists. I was informed that no European had visited it for half a dozen years. My dragoman knew nothing about the way to it. The peasant whom he engaged as guide, whether from ignorance or from stubbornness arising from repeated altercations with the dragoman, proved of very little use. For a considerable part of the way, I had to act as guide myself. There is no more shadow of difficulty or danger than there would be in a similar journey across the hills of Yorkshire or Sutherland; but progress among hills is always slow when one has nothing to steer by beyond a vague notion of the general direction. The journey from Bethlehem, which should have taken about four hours, and which David, on the morning that made Elah memorable, probably completed in less than three, was lengthened out to six. On arrival, I was agreeably surprised to find my tents beginning to be pitched. Starting from Bethlehem an hour before me, my little caravan had gone by a way said to be longer and easier for the mules, but which had turned out to be shorter than my wanderings. However, I took the whole of the second day, and some short time before starting on the third, to examine the locality. I climbed more than

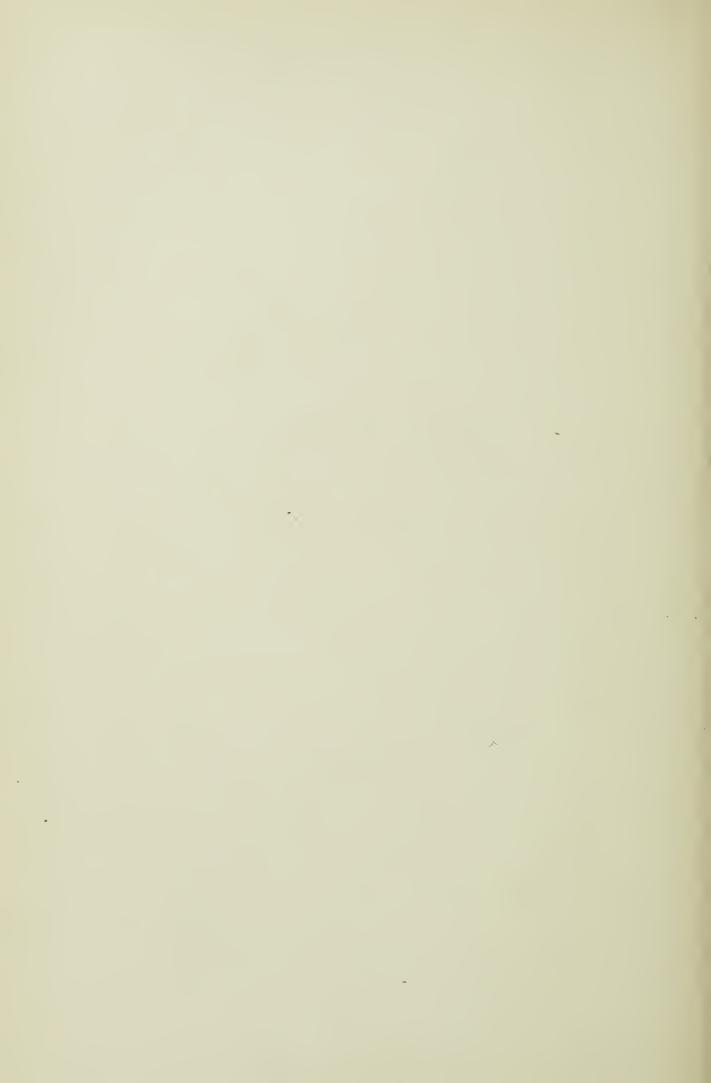
one of the little hills on the northern side, then crossed the Wady-es-Samt to Socoh, the head-quarters of the Philistines, and then walked some distance west along the southern line of heights before recrossing to Beit-Nettif, where my tents were pitched, and somewhere in the neighbourhood of which, it is agreed on all sides, that Saul and his army had their station.

One feature in the view from Socoh may be mentioned before I endeavour to apply what I saw of the locality to the recorded story of the battle. A good deal of the corn-land in the valley had recently been Large patches of it were of a deep red ploughed. colour, not uncommon in the good soil of other lands, but exceptional, and therefore remarkable, in Palestine. May not this have suggested the name Ephes-dammim —field of blood—applied to the chief station of the invading host? May not the name be older than the event with which it is associated? At all events it must have been on these red corn-lands that the chariots were drawn up and that the decisive struggle took place. To one whose eye has become used to the stonegray appearance which ploughed land presents in most parts of the country, the name seems suitable apart from history.

There is little difficulty, when one is on the ground, in seeing the reason for every step that was taken by the contending armies. And the accompanying map

of the battle-field of Elah should make all I have to say easily intelligible. The Philistines were practically unassailable so long as they kept to the bottom of the Wady-es-Samt. The absolutely flat part of it is in most places about half a mile in width, while its sides rise so gently at first towards the bounding hills that the average breadth of ground available for the evolutions of chariots may be set down as not less than three-quarters of a mile. But by merely holding the valley the Philistines gained nothing. They had to seize the northern line of heights and to disperse the army that defended them, before they could carry out their plan of invading Judah. A little east of Beit-Nettif, the Wady-es-Samt branches out into the two narrower valleys of the Wady-el-Mesarr and the Wady-es-Sur—the former running north-east and the latter south-east among the central Judean hills. The latter they might have easily followed. Their chariots could have perfectly guarded their rear as they marched on. But that route would have led them far south in the direction of Hebron; and the clans in that neighbourhood were those which were still submissive and which they had no reason to molest. they had turned north-east by the Wady-el-Mesarr, they would have exposed their flank to the active enemy above them, and that upon a field too narrow for their chariots to act on with effect. It was mani-





festly the business of their commanders to gain the heights before advancing beyond the point where the valley is broad and open. And Saul, with a general's eye, had taken post at the only point where an attack upon the heights was likely to succeed.

The whole scene is remarkably different from the narrow and steep ravine at Geba. The mere sight of it is the best illustration of how much Israel had advanced in courage, and firmness, and military resource, during the years that had passed since they laid the foundation of their freedom. At Geba, the position chosen was as nearly as possible unassailable. only could no chariots attack it, but even for footmen it was hard to assail. The ascent is so steep that disciplined soldiers could not keep their ranks in scaling it—least of all men like the Philistines, accustomed to act in a phalanx on the plains. It was exactly the position which a few imperfectly disciplined but warlike mountaineers might hope to defend against a greatly superior and well-trained force. Here, on the other hand, the heights are both lower and more accessible. I think they seldom attain a height of two hundred feet above the valley. Chariots, indeed, could not ascend them except in the transverse valley running up to Beit-Nettif, of which I shall speak immediately. But footmen might keep their ranks in attack at many places along the four or five miles of height which line the north side of the Wady-es-Samt, from where it enters the hills to the place where it divides.

It was a proud day for Israel when, in this strong but not unassailable position, they held back that mighty and well-ordered host. The Philistines had manifestly lost the confidence which characterised them once. If they had not lost it, they would have hesitated but little about charging up the slope at almost any point. But they would not venture on an action except where their chariots could support them. And there was only one point where this was possible. It was the broad and comparatively gentle ascent from the Wadyes-Samt to Beit-Nettif. Along it the rough road still climbs northward, with one or two turnings in its course, but without any actual zigzagging or any need for it. Here chariots, if driven skilfully, might perhaps give some aid in an attack. At least they could give confidence to infantry by being at hand to cover their retreat. And here, certainly, if the way were clear, chariots could gain the heights and dash down the valleys in the rear to cut off the retreat of defenders who had once been broken.

This break-down in the line of heights is marked enough to be called a valley. A little stream runs down it in the winter. Its bed was dry when I saw it, though there were still some scattered pools in the

broader water-course of the Wady-es-Samt below. I believe this opening in the line of heights, the broad bed of the little tributary stream, to be what is termed the valley of Elah in the Book of Samuel. The name is applied by all recent writers to the far broader and flatter Wady-es-Samt below. But the valley of Elah means the valley of the terebinth; and, little as I know of botany, I know enough to be tolerably certain that terebinth-trees never grew in the flat corn-lands of the Wady-es-Samt. On the slope leading up to Beit-Nettif, there is the exact locale that suits the terebinth; and I saw no finer specimen of that tree in Palestine than one that is growing on it now. This gentler slope is obviously the place where Saul posted the main body of his army; and, according to the Book of Samuel, it was in "the valley of Elah" that Israel was "fighting with the Philistines." We shall see how it was only at a later stage that the combat was transferred to the plain beneath, of which for a time the Philistines held undisputed possession by means of their chariots.

If this ascent to Beit-Nettif were firmly held, Saul needed only a few outposts at intervals along the line of heights which stretched for nearly four miles upon his right, and for less than a mile upon his left. Before an attack from below could be prepared, he could send reinforements along the ridge to any portion of this line that might be threatened. If the

cross valley could be defended, the whole line was safe. And means for its defence were not awanting. Trenches could easily be dug and palisades or barricades erected. The hillsides are sprinkled even now with trees, and in Saul's time they were probably thickly wooded. Thus the best materials for effective entrenchment were at hand. With the sides of the ascending valley lined with archers and slingers, with some six hundred yards of breastwork across it towards the top, and with the thousands of Israel ready to defend it to the last, there was a position against which chariots could do nothing by themselves, and from which it is not surprising that the bravest bands of footmen should recoil. The line AB upon the map marks where the entrenchment must have been.

Thus the great invasion was checked at the outset. The position was one that could not be turned, as that of Geba might have been. Doubtless the Philistines might have retired by the Wady-es-Samt to their own plains, and then tried some other line of approach to the mountain land. But such a retreat from foes whom they pretended to despise, would have been dishonourable, and might easily have been dangerous. And even if it were safely carried out and the army directed by some other route against either Benjamin or Judah, it would have been only to find Saul prepared to meet it in some other strong position.

For the Israelites, besides being far the more mobile force, had all the advantage of acting upon inner lines. Nor could the Philistines do anything effectual to lay waste the country, as they had tried to do at Michmash. They had, indeed, the whole of the south of Judah at their mercy; but that was the region that had not yet revolted, and its inhabitants had probably supplied a contingent to the invading army. The only remaining hope of success was to allure Saul from his strong position, to force a passage at Beit-Nettif, and so to gain access to the country about Bethlehem, and the valleys of Benjamin beyond it.

Saul of course did not keep his men always behind their defences. It was as much his interest to draw on the Philistines to attack his position as it was theirs to draw him down into the plain. Therefore, day by day, the Israelites were arrayed in front of the entrenchment, ready gradually to retreat on it if the Philistines committed themselves to an assault. And, day by day, the Philistines were drawn up beneath, ready to hurl the dense mass of their chariots on their enemies if once they were tempted out upon the plain. Night by night, when they found that the Israelites were not to be enticed unto such unequal combat, the Philistines retired to the southern line of heights towards Socoh. Thus the narrative is even minutely accurate when it says that "the Philistines stood on

the mountain on the one side and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side; and there was a valley between them."

The expedient on which the Philistine generals chiefly relied for drawing Saul's army from its position, was far from unfamiliar in ancient warfare. had in their army a warrior of gigantic height and proportionate strength and skill. As Goliath of Gath, his name is known to everyone acquainted with the literature of any Christian nation. Day by day, Goliath was sent to parade in front of the army of Israel, as it stood prepared for battle around, and in front of, its entrenchment. Day by day he challenged it to send a champion to fight with him. Probably Goliath scarcely expected that such a champion would come forward. If any one dared to do so, he had little doubt of the result, and little doubt that the confusion arising from his victory would afford a favourable opportunity for attack. For of course neither army would dream of being bound by the result of any combat that might take place. It was merely in the grandiloquence of challenge that Goliath said that if an Israelite slew him the Philistines would become servants to Saul. The most likely result of the challenge would be that a band of Israelites would rush down upon the challenger. The punctilios of chivalry have never been much observed in such struggles for existence as

Israel was engaged in. Nor would even the rules of chivalry have forbidden an attack by the many on the one until such time as the duel had been definitely accepted. That a number of the enemy should rush down on him was the very thing that Goliath—or at all events his generals—desired. The moment a band of Israelites darted down, a band of Philistines would start out to meet them. With blood inflamed on both sides, a general battle might be drawn on, in which, by judiciously giving ground, the Philistines might gradually lure their foes into the plain. Then a charge of chariots would decide the day. The historian speaks of Goliath's challenge being repeated for "forty days." Perhaps he means the number to be taken literally. But it is much more likely that he uses the phrase to indicate that the armies held the position and acted in the manner he has described for many days, though for how many he did not know.

It is probable that at first Saul's main difficulty was to keep his men from rushing out against the challenger, and thus falling into the trap that had been laid for them. When the challenge had been often repeated, its effect, very naturally, was rather to discourage them and dispose them to shrink back within the shelter of their entrenchment. But it shows Saul's hold upon his men,—it shows how intelligent and steady as well as brave the soldiers of Benjamin had

grown, when under such provocation the position was maintained so long. The contrast is very striking with the most important battle in the whole long history of England. Senlac was lost, and England was lost along with it, because, in circumstances precisely similar, a body of the defenders was drawn away from the hill which they were meant to hold, and might have held with ease had they been steady, until they were crushed by a charge of the mailed horsemen who played the same part in the Norman army as the chariots in the army of the Philistines. Where Harold signally failed, and lost crown and life because he failed, Saul as signally succeeded.

Thus matters long continued. So far, the advantage was entirely with the Israelites. But the strain on them might soon have become too great, if a new actor had not come upon the scene.

The heart of the old chief of Bethlehem was in the army where his sons and clan were fighting for their native hills and for their fathers' faith. Doubtless he had sent supplies and received news several times already; but when the issue was so long delayed he naturally grew anxious. He still had with him his youngest son, the darling of the household, a lad not yet experienced in war but brought up in all the simplicity and hardihood of pastoral life, and active, intelligent, and brave far above the ordinary standard. Him

he resolved to send with his next convoy of supplies, so that he might learn exactly how things were tending. On reaching the army, as he did early in the morning, David passed forward along with those who were being drawn up as usual in front of the entrenchment. He was thus a witness to the customary challenge of Goliath. He found it a current saying among the soldiers that any one who slew the challenger would receive the daughter of the king in marriage, and have his family ennobled if he were of mean descent.

I doubt whether any proclamation to this effect had really been made by Saul. The historian carefully confines himself to saying that such a story was current with the soldiers. It is the kind of story that might easily arise from some very meagre germ of truth. In any case, the prospect of such reward would count for nothing to one whose blood was the bluest in the land, and who, in every point of view except that Saul had personally become the symbol of Israel's freedom, would count it small promotion to marry into a family of Benjamin. It was not the hope of reward, it was only sudden insight into what might be done for the cause of Israel and of God, that made David volunteer to meet the champion of the Philistines. Not arrayed in sword and mail, which Saul would willingly have girt him with,—which indeed with becoming modesty he rejected only when he found on trial that they were

not suitable for him, however suitable for others,—with nothing in his hand except his shepherd's sling and five large stones from the little water-course, and trusting only in the living God, who had called him, as he felt, to do this particular thing, David went forward to the combat. I need not recount what followed. If there be one among my readers who does not remember every detail, let him read again the eleven verses beginning with the forty-first, where the tale is told with a matchless simplicity and force which repetition would only spoil.

On one point only does it seem desirable to dwell. Commentators moralise on how Saul must have lost all faith when he did not meet the boastful challenger himself, and weary themselves in wondering why Jonathan at least, whose faith and courage they cannot doubt, did not volunteer to be the champion of Israel. Remarks of this kind may be edifying, but they are curiously misplaced. They arise from forgetting how much every historian, particularly one whose work is a model of studied brevity, necessarily leaves to be supplied by common sense. They show complete inattention to considerations which, to one who tries to make a picture of events as they occurred, are plain on the surface of the narrative. For Saul, or even Jonathan, it would have been manifest neglect of duty to encounter a mere sworder like Goliath. It would

have been to commit the error which has caused "dark Flodden's dismal tale" to be written ineffaceably in blood and tears across the page of Scotland's story. For all the bitter woe of the fatal strife

> "Where shiver'd was fair Scotland's spear, And broken was her shield,"

arose because the leader who should have done his duty as general and as king, had set his heart on nothing higher than the empty glory of a knighterrant. It was only good luck and the rare personal skill of King Robert that saved Scotland from a like calamity on the eve of Bannockburn. And how fatal the loss of Saul or Jonathan would have been to Israel, can nowhere be better seen than in the mischance which cut off not King Harold only, but Gurth and Leofwine as well, in the fatal fight at Senlac. For if any son of Godwin had survived, there can be little doubt that—for good or evil, who can tell?—the Norman would never have trodden England down.

It was not as if Israel were in extremity. If things had come to that, neither Saul nor Jonathan would have thought twice about his life, even apart from that confidence in the living God in which Jonathan never faltered, and which Saul had certainly not lost as yet. But Israel had had everything its own way hitherto. So long as they held that position across

the top of the valley of Elah, they were practically victorious. For one of the leaders of an army standing firm on the defensive to accept the challenge of a strong man-at-arms among the baffled assailants, would in that age, as in every age, have been simply ludi-Imagine Wellington going out from the lines of Torres Vedras to single combat with some French trooper, detailed to challenge him by Massena! It was different when the combat was accepted by a youth holding no position in the army and still personally obscure,—especially when he accepted it in a spirit of reliance on Jehovah which gave ground for confidence that he would not fail. That might be turned to good account, and was so. In this, as it is always, God's call was different to men differently qualified and differently circumstanced. What it was wise and right for David to do, what it showed faith and courage and insight that he volunteered to do, it would have been a piece of faithless folly for Saul or Jonathan to undertake.

It must have been low down the green slope of Elah, where it merges in the flat basin of the Wady-es-Samt below, not much above the spot where the little water-course joins the larger one, that the champions approached each other. The two armies were gathered round; their main bodies probably much nearer than they had been at any time during the long watch they

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had kept upon each other. The Israelites were above, crowding out in front of the entrenchment but ready to fall back on it if the result of the combat should prove adverse. The Philistines stood below; the ordered ranks of their infantry in long array before, the dark masses of their chariots behind—all of them, we may be certain, on fire with the assurance that the long delayed hour of victory had come. Of the issue of the combat they could not doubt. soon as the boastful stripling was down, they would charge their discouraged foemen. They would be on them before the shelter of their trenches could be gained. It would go hard if they did not soon hew a path through all obstruction for their chariots. An hour or two would see them crowning the ridge that had hitherto defied them—would see them slaughtering the rude highlanders along the by-paths in their rear—would see the long peaceful villages and rich vineyards of rebellious Judah at their mercy.

Their confidence proved their ruin. For in proportion to their overweening certainty of victory was the dismay that seized them when their champion lay dead beneath the stripling's arm. And they had an adversary who knew how to make use of their dismay. The eye of the hero king of Benjamin was on them. He saw that the moment of victory had come. Knowing how David's success would rouse the spirits of his

men, nerved by the consciousness that Jehovah had sent help which it would most honour Him to turn to full account, Saul gave the word to charge. With the same judicious rashness with which long years before he had plunged across the Wady Suweinit leaving Geba undefended, he hurled his vine-dressers and herdsmen now across a narrower interval on the mailed and serried battalions of the Philistines. had been right and wise to keep his host patient and steady those many days upon the heights. It was right and wise, since the call of duty was so clear, to come down from the fastness that had served him well, and to count horsemen and chariots as nothing since the living God in his providence had given the signal to attack them. And so, with the long stern shout that boded victory, the Israelites burst upon the foe. It was the charge of the Swiss at Granson and at Morat, of the Highlanders at Killiecrankie and Prestonpans.

Whether the disciplined troops were swept away as easily as in those far-famed triumphs of untrained but indomitable valour, we have not the means of ascertaining. It may be that in the irrepressible panic of the moment those turned their backs who had never fled before, and that the one thought of the men in the chariots supposed to be invincible was to escape as soon as might be from the fray. But it may be that

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there was many a desperate rally and many a stubborn effort to regain accustomed order, before discipline finally gave way. But, whether soon or late, it did so in the end; and that mighty host, a mere mass of disordered fugitives, was chased and slaughtered to the gates of Gath and Ekron.

Perhaps it was in some pause in the battle or pursuit, perhaps only at night when the pursuers had returned to plunder the camp at Socoh, that the young champion who had been the occasion of the greatest triumph that Israel had won in all her strife for freedom, was presented to King Saul. By this time he had learned that the hero of the hour was one whom he had loved before, whose family's adherence had been as great a gain to the national cause as his minstrelsy had been a soothing balm to his own wounded spirit. With that generosity of feeling which was among the most marked of his characteristics, Saul insisted on David's becoming permanently a member of his household. "He would let him go no more home to his father's house." At first there was no vestige of jealousy or suspicion—no thought that the high-born lad, by his influence over Judah, might by and by become a rival to the king. The one thought uppermost for the moment was that no honour could be too great for him who had served Israel and Israel's God so well, and that no effort should be spared to identify him completely with the cause for which he had ventured all.

And there was one who welcomed David with yet tenderer affection than the king, and whose trust and friendship better stood the trials that the after years brought with them. When he met the victor in all the ruddy beauty of his youth, Jonathan was reminded of the time when as a boy he also had ventured his life for Israel and had his service so gloriously acknowledged by the Lord. Nothing would content the awakened feelings of his heart—the tenderest, perhaps, and purest that ever beat within a soldier's bosom—except the dearest marks of personal affection. He made a covenant with David "because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his apparel, even to his sword and to his bow and to his girdle."

It seemed as if bright days were now at hand for the rescued and renovated nation. The mightiest host that the wealth and skill of Philistia could send out had been met on the frontier, had been long defied and held in check, had been driven home in ruin, until such as escaped the slaughter were left to cower in terror behind the impenetrable walls which to these simple mountaineers were the highest expression of earthly power. And now Judah would gather all its force to ELAH. 145

help the cause of freedom. The darling of its noblest, and probably its most powerful house, was knit in closest bonds with the family of the king. What could follow except that soon every valley in Israel would be free, and that the nation would fulfil the hopes which had cheered its lawgiver when he sent it forth to do its work for mankind with lofty strains like these:

"There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun, Who rideth upon the heavens for thy help, And in his excellency on the skies. The eternal God is thy dwelling-place, And underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy from before thee And said destroy. And Israel dwelleth in safety The fountain of Jacob alone, In a land of corn and wine; Yea his heavens drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: Who is like unto thee, a people saved by the Lord The shield of thy help And that is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall submit themselves unto thee; And thou shalt tread upon their high places."

There was one, indeed, who was not comforted by such bright visions of the coming days as these. The aged Samuel had already seen the working of the canker which would too surely lay all Saul's honour in the

dust. But to earnest and faithful men who had not Samuel's opportunities for observation, or could not read man's heart so well, it must have seemed that troubles were at an end and perfect victory and lasting joy at hand.

Yet the evil with which in all this world's experience good is so inextricably mingled, did not take long to show itself. The victors spent a day or two in spoiling and burying the dead, in gathering and dividing the plunder of the camp, and it may be also in solemn thanksgiving to God-from whom it would be felt by many, and admitted by all, that the victory had come. Then their march was directed home. Their route lay at first through Judah. There, some poet, in the day or two since the battle, had composed a song with which the conquerors were greeted everywhere. song itself has not come down to us, but only its chorus or refrain. That has been preserved, not for the sake of any truth or beauty in it, but on account of the evil of which it became the occasion soon. "Saul" -such was the reiterated burden-"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Natural enough such a burden might be in the mouth of a poet of Judah, and natural enough in the mouths of the maids of Judah who sang it to their timbrels in the dance. Natural enough, yet how thoroughly unjust!

The Israelites, like all great nations, clung to their

ancient families, respected, obeyed, and loved them, so long as they were not totally unworthy of reverence and love. When a scion of their noblest house, beloved not only for his birth but for his gifts of beauty and minstrelsy and song, of skill in tending his flocks and daring in defending them, and for a modesty that made all his gifts more precious, the hearty comrade, the admired model of all the youth of Bethlehemwhen such a one could be hailed as the deliverer of Israel, it was perhaps inevitable that those who counted kinship with him should observe no measure in their praises. At all events it was thus they acted. For the position assigned to David in the song was one to which he had no just claim. To praise him at Saul's expense, to set him as the song did above Saul, was an example of how men in those days, exactly as they do still, caught at whatever of truth and glory is superficial and neglected what is fundamental. David and Saul had each of them done, and done nobly, the work that was given him to do. But if Saul had not kept the enemy those many days in check, if he had not by long years of contest and of labour formed the men of free Israel into intelligent and steady soldiers, able to profit by an opportunity when it came to them, the mere slaying of Goliath would have been destitute alike of significance and result.

It is not wonderful that the song suggested to the

mind of Saul, moody and suspicious as he had already grown, that Judah would never be faithful to his kingship, and that David would become the leader of a rival party in the land. It is true, there was no ground for his suspicions. It is true that if he had watched David with as just and kindly eyes as Jonathan did in the years that followed, he would have learned how free the young man was at this stage of all personal ambition, and how simply his heart was set on doing good to Israel and on furthering God's cause by means of it. And it is doubtless also true that if this song had never been composed, something else would sooner or later have poisoned the mind of Saul against the son of Jesse, marked out as he was by manifest destiny to become the leading man in Judah. It was in Saul himself—in his consciousness of being no longer single-hearted in his work and aims—that the evil lay. Yet, had it not been for the song, the evil might have lain dormant until its outburst might have been less ruinous than it was. Thus the song, if not the cause, was at all events the occasion, of the fatal enmity which blasted the hopes inspired by the victory at Elah, which marred the inner life and the whole work of Israel to the latest hour of its national existence, and which (those who believe in the absolute continuity of history will not laugh at me for saying it) has interfered with the right development of God's

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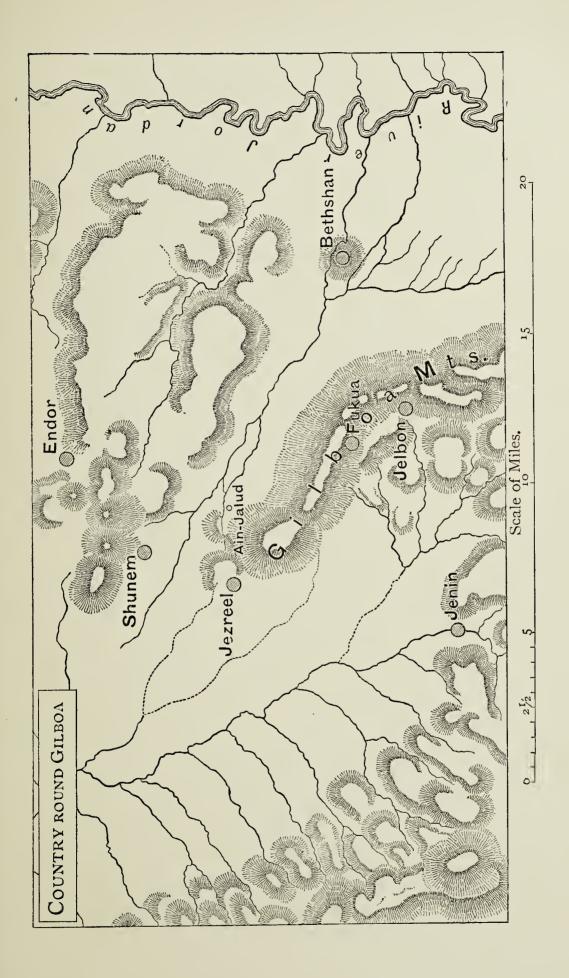
plan of love, and is weakening whatever efforts are being made for the salvation and the gladdening of mankind to-day.

But enough of thoughts like these. Despite the evil that followed hard upon it, the battle of Elah effected good which was indispensable at the time, and of which the fruits endure and will endure. That is the reason why the historian of Israel recounts it in such unusual detail. And that should be the prevailing thought with every student of the record and every visitor to the green hillsides which illustrate it so well.

## CHAPTER VI.

## GILBOA.

We have surveyed the scenes of the two great victories which made Israel free. We have next to turn to a place of sadder memories. For Gilboa is the most mournful word in all the military annals of the Chosen Race. To me at least, the defeat which the name recalls, is even sadder than the catastrophe four centuries after at Megiddo, which virtually destroyed the last fragment of the Israelitish kingdom and proclaimed that, as an organised independent nation, the seed of Abraham were set aside for ever from the working out of God's designs for men. At Megiddo, judgment came which had been preparing long. It came sharp and swift, when lingering slow decay was to all appearance the sole alternative. It came when the hero at the nation's head was striving—whether wisely or unwisely, yet striving with all his might to do the duty that Providence laid on him. No inner corruption on the part of men who had once been faithful to Israel and to God, brought that judgment But at Gilboa, it was in the hey-day of the nation's renovated youth that ruin came. It came





when, to all appearance, the most moderate faithfulness must have secured a long history of glory and of usefulness. It came through the debasement of those who had once been earnest and devoted,—of those who, despite their melancholy fall, had earned by earlier deeds the lasting gratitude of mankind.

If the moral significance of the battle, the reasons why it was fought so far away from the scenes of the earlier campaigns, or the conditions determining its issue, are to be understood aright, some outline must be given of the history of the years that passed between the victory at Elah and the time when on Gilboa's blood-stained heights "the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away." These years were some ten or twelve. At Elah, David was still a boy. When Gilboa was fought he was close on thirty. Such parts of the history as bear upon the quarrel between Saul and David—between Benjamin and Northern Judah—are given at considerable length in the First Book of Samuel, from the eighteenth chapter to the twenty-sixth. This quarrel was the determining factor in the moral and spiritual history of the nation. It naturally receives most attention from a writer whose main concern is with moral and spiritual results. The framework of external fact is but slightly indicated. But it is plain that their defeat at Elah did not make the Philistines give up the contest. The war went on without inter-

Twice at least, in the next few years, there mission. was an attempt to invade Saul's kingdom on a grand scale. In fact, without regular organised invasion, the Philistines could now have little hope of effecting any-There is no indication that they retained any garrisons within the proper territory of Saul. They still held, indeed, the great fortress of Bethshan, commanding the eastern part of the plain of Jezreel and the passage across the Jordan. It seems likely that they had a few other posts of observation close to the Israelitish frontiers. But every vestige of their dominion had probably been destroyed between Bethshan in the north and whatever may have been the most southerly point of Judah to which the influence of the family of Bethlehem extended. The clans of the extreme south were still faithful to the Philistines. They followed the lead of the house of Caleb, the possessors of Hebron and the neighbouring land of Ziph; and that house, as is plain from the narrative, was animated by hereditary jealousy of the rival house of Bethlehem. Since Jesse had led his neighbours to adhere to the cause of liberated Israel, they would cling all the more closely to the Philistines. It is certain that they did not give in their adhesion to Saul until submission to him seemed likely to give an opportunity for securing the downfall of their On the north, it does not seem that Saul rivals.

Jezreel, or included that plain in his dominion. Yet his kingdom extended now over nearly two thousand square miles of territory—and of territory the greater part of which was peopled by hardy and prosperous inhabitants, whom the bygone years had trained in war and made steady and persevering as well as brave. He had also secured the adhesion of the tribes to the east of the Jordan. He had united them in the general support of his cause, though he may not have been formally acknowledged as their king. So greatly had the cause of freedom prospered since the days of Michmash, when its only refuge was some two hundred square miles of country, mostly uninhabited and waste.

The war was carried on not only by Philistine invasion but by raids of the Israelites into the rich country of their former conquerors; and one such raid into that home of fertility and civilisation would do more mischief than a dozen tolerably successful expeditions into the mountains would make up for. The state of matters was the same as was exemplified in the history of Britain after Bannockburn. Then also invasions of Scotland did not cease. But they effected little, and ample reprisal was taken in the inroads by which the lands benorth the Humber were swept and harried till they were on the point of submitting to King Robert and becoming an integral portion of his kingdom.

In all these invasions and raids, David soon took a leading place. He was appointed to high command in the small regular army that was constantly on foot. Young as he was, his genius for war made him soon as great a favourite with the nation at large as he was with Judah. He became the king's son-in-law. He was manifestly destined, not less by his personal merit than by his high position and his hereditary hold on a powerful tribe, to become one of the foremost nobles of the kingdom. That it was possible for him with such temptations to remain a loyal subject, was a thing that Saul could no longer understand. From an early stage in his career, the king had let himself be carried away too often by regard for mere glory and military power. Once he had apprehended—when "the new heart" was given him,—the real glory of his position, as one who was to win battles and wield authority, but only as a means of teaching Israel to be faithful to Jehovah's laws and to manifest the spirit and do the work which these laws embodied and pointed out. He had seen this grand ideal. He was pledged, not only to Samuel but to God and to himself, to spend his life in realising it. Yet he had been unfaithful. Led away by the false glamour of worldly honour, he had done the great things he had done, quite as much with the view of winning power to himself as with the view of benefiting the cause of God. Yet in his heart he always

knew that this cause alone was worthy of his, or any sane man's efforts. And he knew the divided state of his own mind. He knew it when it was not yet so much as guessed by others, save by Samuel in prophetic insight. Hence the "evil spirit," the dejection, the excitement, the almost madness, that had begun occasionally to seize him even before Judah owned his leadership or David crossed his path.

To the thoughtful mind, these fits of frenzy are the surest token of the inherent nobility of Saul. frenzy does not seize upon a base man when he is consciously unfaithful to a high ideal. Contented and calm he can keep along his meaner way. Now, with David in all the strength of his family and personal claims beside him, the time of special trial, the time of final and unalterable decision, had come for Saul. Once David had risen to distinction, there was every natural probability that he was the coming King of Israel. Youngest of his family though he was, circumstances had made him the representative of the noblest house in a tribe many times more powerful than it was possible for Benjamin to become; and kingship was still so new that mere hereditary claims on succession to it would have but little weight. would plainly be best for Israel, and therefore for God's cause on earth, that the hegemony and the kingship should rest with Judah, now that Judah was

ranged on the side of freedom. Ephraim, indeed, had perhaps equal, or even better, claims; but Ephraim had produced no man who was manifestly fit to be ruler of the land. Would Saul acquiesce in the course things were plainly taking? Or would he sacrifice God's cause in order that his tribe and family might retain pre-eminence? Practically, in the end, after many a short-lived rise into a better mind and many a struggle with himself, he made the meaner choice. His high-souled son had grace to make the nobler one. Jonathan saw how things were tending as clearly as his father; but for the good of Jehovah's people he could consent, nay he could rejoice, that no crown was ever to adorn his brow. He knew that if David became king, it would not be because he was prompted by ambition, but because the will of God, made plain in providence, appointed kingship for him. In his last recorded interview<sup>1</sup> with the youth in whom he recognised one who, like himself, had no desire save to do God's will in whatever sphere he might be called to, and whom in the teeth of flattery and slander he still "loved as his own soul," Jonathan's cheering picture of the future was that, after his father, David should be king, and he, as prince of Benjamin, should be next to him,—the foremost and most faithful of his subjects.

But with Saul, moral deterioration, once he took

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>1 Samuel xxiii. 15-18.

the fatal turn, was rapid. So wholly was his mind engrossed with the thought of power that he soon came to believe that David would not even wait for his death but was plotting to deprive him of the throne at once. The most innocent action he tortured into the sign of a conspiracy. And his dark suspicions were not long of inciting him to deeds as dark. He set David on the most dangerous exploits, in the hope that he might fall in battle—an example which in later years, when he also was corrupted, David was himself too shamefully to follow.1 When this base plan had failed, when David's marvellous successes had only raised him still higher in men's esteem, he made various attempts to slay him with his own hand. These attempts were at first passed by as accesses of the frenzy to which it was well known that he was occasionally subject. For years it was suspected by few, and not known certainly by anyone, that the king was bent on the destruction of his son-in-law. Even Jonathan, just before the breach became irreparable, maintained to David that his father had no deliberate intention to take his life. And it was true enough that Saul's mind was not always fixed on his dark design. The remonstrances of Jonathan on one occasion, the renewal of his old high impulses through intercourse with Samuel on another, produced

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 2 Samuel xi. 14-27.

reconciliations which though extremely short-lived were by no means feigned. And even after his enmity was proclaimed, even when he was pursuing David as a public enemy, Saul's inherent generosity twice burst forth uncontrollably, on his learning how David had proved his loyalty by refusing to "put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed."

Meanwhile David had not only no thought of rebellion, but was content to leave the whole future, even after the king should die, in the hands of Providence. As yet, his only wish was to serve Israel and Israel's God, along any line in which his service promised to be useful. When he was convinced that Saul was unchangeably set against him, he took refuge with Samuel, and practically enrolled himself among the youths in training to be prophets. Despite his lineage and his prospects, he would willingly have spent his life in cultivating his gifts of minstrelsy and song, and have let his countrymen forget that he had ever come forward as a warrior or statesman. Only when he found that even his retirement would not appease the king, did he feel himself driven into a different course of action.

I do not mean that, in his relations with Saul, David was always in the right. Doubtless he admitted evil feelings and was betrayed into evil actions, though the historian does not dwell on them. So Herodotus

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deals tenderly with the deeds that dimmed the glory of Miltiades, and Scottish writers have passed lightly over the tergiversations of the house of Bruce, both before and after the days of King Robert—whose own patriotic fame, though Scotsmen do not dwell on it, was by no means always spotless. So, an Israelitish writer of an after age was certain to be influenced by the thought of what David did at last for his native land. The history would be unnatural if such thoughts did not tinge it. Yet the historian is fair. He records more facts than one, though this is not the place to bring them forward, which show the dark side of David's character. He records facts which show how seeds were sown, by David's unhappy relations with the Benjamites and their king, which brought forth an abundant crop of evil for himself and for his people in later years. Yet David's loyalty and superiority to mere selfish considerations appear from this,—that, even when sorest pressed, he never had recourse to—deliberately refused to have recourse to—what would have been the first resource of a mere self-seeker. He had always the means of effective rebellion within his reach, and that without any open defection to the common foe. The tribe of Judah had no loyalty to the person of the king, or to the chiefs of Benjamin who surrounded him. It was the influence of the house of Bethlehem that had led

any of the clans of Judah to revolt against the Phil-Had David set up the standard of rebellion, half his tribe would have flocked to it; and if these were unable to stand against the forces of the north, help from the Philistines would certainly have been got on as easy terms as were accorded by the Spanish sovereigns to Boabdil, when he established separate interests for himself in the doomed kingdom of Gra-Saul knew this so well that he never ventured to set foot across the frontier of Judah in pursuit of David till he was invited by the Ziphites, when, through jealousy of the rival house, they first connected themselves with the party of the patriots. David might at any time have made a kingdom for himself, either really independent or with independence enough to satisfy appearances; but, rather than ruin the nation and the cause of God by awakening civil war, he was content to bear reproach and shame, content to remove his family to a distant land lest the clan should take arms in spite of him, and content to live for years an outlaw's life, hunted "like a partridge on the mountains." The man who made that choice, however great his errors, was true at heart.

But to return to our outline of the events that led to the battle of Gilboa. Saul's determination to destroy David was at last openly avowed. Jonathan was unable to protect him. He could do nothing for his

friend except to help him to escape, in safety but The story<sup>1</sup> is told with such simple, yet alone. graphic pathos, that one who reads intelligently can hardly choose but join in the floods of tears with which the friends took their long farewell. For it was not personal feeling that caused their tears to flow. They understood what their parting meant. It meant that there was to be schism thenceforward, and therefore weakness, among the people whose united and concentrated energies were indispensable for the work they had to do. It meant that Benjamin and Judah were to be sundered, and that the hopes which enraptured Jonathan when he took the high-born youth to his heart of hearts, were blighted for evermore. who sees what was implied in it, all history presents no sadder spectacle than that fateful parting beside the rock of Ezel.

David at first resorted to the Philistines, expecting to be welcomed for reasons like those which led the Great King, in a later age, to give so royal a reception to Themistocles. The step cannot have been a right one. The taking of it betrays that trusting to policy and leaning to deceit from which David, at his best, was never free. Yet it was less evil than an open kindling of civil war. When he found that his welcome among the Philistines was a doubtful one, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>1 Samuel xx.

fugitive became for years the leader of an outlawed band in Judah, passing through adventures the record of which, whatever the pretentiousness of modern criticism may say, bears reality stamped upon its Finally, for sixteen months, he and the company that had joined him remained at Ziklag, forming a minute principality under the protection of the Philistines. Through all these years, the king's attention was drawn away from duty and turned upon the man whom he was bent on treating as a traitor. Nor was it this neglect of duty alone that prepared for the Saul, in his mad resolve to catastrophe of Gilboa. build up his dynasty at all costs, was hurried into acts of cruel tyranny, of which the judicial murder of the priests of Jehovah and the massacre of the Gibeonites —the most faithful of the subject allies of Israel—are mentioned merely as examples. In these deeds of tyranny and folly, Saul must have had the support of the chiefs of Benjamin as a whole. His circumstances were such that he could not act as a despotic ruler. It is proof enough, even if there were not much else to bear out the inference, that Benjamin was corrupted as well as Saul. The tribe as a whole, though not necessarily every man of influence within it, was willing to have such deeds done rather than lose their foremost To preserve the honour and power on which their hearts were set, they practically consented that

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the public good should suffer and the work of God be ruined.

Amidst these disorders, the man who was the new founder of the nation passed away, in extreme old age; for "Samuel died, and all Israel gathered themselves together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah." His death was probably not regarded as any loss by Saul; and, in a directly military sense, perhaps it scarcely was so. For Samuel had been the first to recognise that in Judah and in David was the nation's only remaining hope. Whatever help he might have given Saul had he survived, would have been given with hesitation and reserve. Yet the sense that the Liberator was no more, and that there was none to take his place as the acknowledged interpreter of Jehovah's will, must have greatly weakened all men, and particularly those who, because they felt themselves soldiers of the Lord, had done most to nerve the nation for its conflict.

The Philistine Government was an interested observer of all these elements of weakness. The time had come when they might hope at last to destroy the power which had taken most of their empire from them, and which, as yet, had only been made stronger by every attempt to put it down. They gathered all their force for a decisive effort. The route selected for invasion shows how strong and well-appointed their army must have been. Their plan now was to pass right round

the territory of Saul. The route at first was north through the maritime plain. In it, the invaders ran no Their chariots were a sufficient safeguard. Yet, even there, in a march which for those days was a long and bold one, there would have been some trouble about supplies if the Philistine forces had not been well equipped and organized. They made their way between Mount Carmel and the rest of the territory of Manasseh. Somewhere in these defiles, the Philistines must have held a fortified post throughout the war; otherwise their march would almost certainly have been opposed at that point. Once through the pass, they were on exactly the kind of field where they could do their best. They were in the broad flat plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon,—the one plain among the hills of Palestine which, by the standards of Europe or of India, is large enough to be termed a plain at all. With an average breadth of about ten miles, it stretches for nearly forty miles right through between the Jordan and the Mediterranean;—a dead flat towards the west, but in its eastern extremity sloping rapidly towards the river, which at the point where it bounds the plain is already nearly seven hundred feet below the level of the sea. Except at the eastern end of Carmel, where the Kishon makes its way through hilly ground, and fifteen miles east of this, where the mountains of Gilboa jut out half way across it from the

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south, the plain is level and smooth, affording an unrivalled field for the evolutions of chariots or the steady march of infantry in phalanx. The great host concentrated at Shunem, under a range that projects from the hills bounding the plain upon the north, right opposite the end of the ridge that forms the backbone of the mountain land which, under Saul, had now shaken itself entirely free. Somewhere in the plain, a review was held; and all was now prepared for attack on the home of Israel. Evidently the plan was for the invaders to enter the southern mountains in the neighbourhood of the modern Jenin, thence to march south along the great central ridge, sending out detachments to lay waste every descending valley upon both sides until the whole land should either submit or be destroyed, and Benjamin and Saul be crushed at last.

Meanwhile, what of Israel's preparations for defence? The men of Benjamin and Ephraim and Manasseh did not fail in the hour of trial. Help came certainly from Gad, and perhaps from Reuben beyond the river. Some of the bolder spirits from Naphtali and Zebulon in the north may have crossed the plain before the Philistines arrived, prepared to fight under the leader whom they regarded as the representative of their race though he had not authority over them as king. Doubtless it was a large and gallant host that assembled round the hero of a hundred fights in

whatever place he had appointed for their rendezvous. Yet it was probably less numerous, and certainly less devoted and less hopeful, than the army that had held the ridge at Elah so stoutly and so long. The men of Judah were not there. The darling of the tribe was a banished man, saved only by the suspicions of his strange allies from serving in the ranks of the invader. And manya chieftain, some of Benjamin itself, alienated by the treatment of Israel's favourite champion, by the massacre of the priests, or some other of the king's rash acts, would either sulk at home or lead to the field but a small and spiritless contingent of his clan. Yet, with the triumphs of a quarter of a century behind them, with the best general of the day in ripe and vigorous age<sup>1</sup> to lead them on, these moun-

<sup>1</sup> It is not possible to determine Saul's age exactly. In the original history his age at the time when he became king was undoubtedly inserted; but, by an unfortunate blunder of early copyists, it is no longer to be found there. Relying on secondary sources of information the Revised Version inserts thirty instead of the omitted number. The authority, however, on which it depends is weak, and the number is not intrinsically And the duration of Saul's reign is not stated by any original authority. Thus it is only by more or less probable inference that his age at the time of Gilboa can be made out. But as Jonathan was already more than a mere boy, Saul cannot have been much under forty when he began to reign. He seems to have reigned fully fifteen years before the battle of Elah, and I have said above that about ten years must have elapsed between Elah and Gilboa. This would make his whole reign extend over twenty-five years at least. Accordingly, it seems probable that Saul was a year or two either above or below sixty-five at the time of his defeat and death.

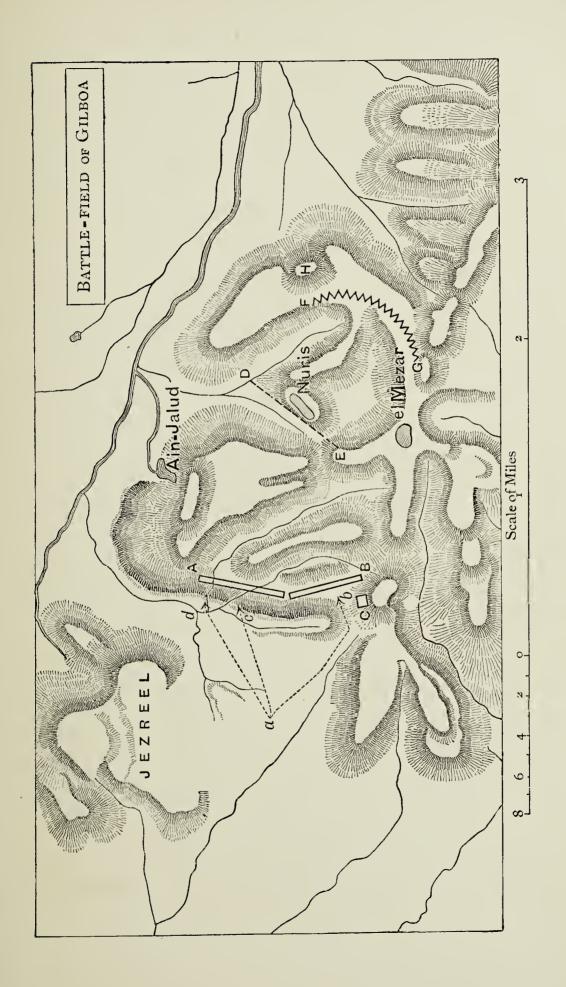
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tain warriors might be expected, however dispirited, to make it a dear-bought victory that even the mightiest host would gain from them. And, if I have read the signs of their place of conflict truly, they right well fulfilled that expectation.

It was on the mountains of Gilboa, "by the fountain which is in Jezreel," that Saul determined to await the enemy. There is no doubt as to the application of the term Gilboa. It means the mountain mass, now known as Jebel Fakua, which rises peak above peak to the height of 1700 feet above the sea, and considerably more above the plain. These mountains may be best described as a horn-like projection from the hills bounding the plain upon the south, which first curves round towards the west for more than three miles, and then runs towards the north-west for five miles further, straight out into the level ground like a peninsula. The greatest height is towards the east, where the curve merges in the straight line and where the range looks down upon the valley of the Jordan and the Acropolis of Bethshan, as it starts abruptly from the plain three miles from the foot of the mountains. At the southern commencement of the curve is the village of Jelbon, which gave its now familiar name to the entire ridge. Three miles northwest of the highest peak, where the peninsula of hills is already well out into the plain, is a second peak,

some 1400 feet in height, crowned by the tolerably prosperous-looking village of el-Mezar. Still further to the north-west are two much lower peaks, between which lies the miserable village of Nuris. North-west again from these peaks, for two miles or a little less, the range falls down into a broken and irregular tableland, narrowing and becoming lower as it goes out into the plain, and bounded by steep, but nowhere inaccessible, stony slopes. The ridge ends in three fingers, as they may be called—the two southern ones mere narrow spurs, the northern, which is the true termination of the ridge, somewhat above a mile in breadth. Across this blunt end of the whole peninsula runs the valley which separates it from the broad flat mound on which Jezreel was built. About this valley I shall have much to say immediately.

"The fountain that is in Jezreel" cannot be identified with such certainty; but it is commonly, and, I have no doubt, correctly, believed to be the great spring known now as Ain Jalud, a little more than a mile east from the bottom of the Hill of Jezreel. It wells up in a cavern at the northern base of Gilboa, forms at once a little lake of five hundred yards or thereabout in circumference, and then runs down past Bethshan into the Jordan in a limpid and unfailing stream, which even now, in the desolation of the country, turns several ever-active mills. It is the fountain





termed in the Book of Judges the Well of Harod; the same where Gideon's three hundred lapped, and in the neighbourhood of which, by his famous stratagem, he discomfited the Midianites.<sup>1</sup>

I came to this point across the plain of Esdraelon from the south; and, after riding past the end of the peninsular mass of hills and halting to examine Jezreel by the way, turned east and had my tents pitched beside the stream from Ain Jalud by mid-day. The whole of that afternoon, until darkness warned me to return, I spent in going up the hillside to the broken table-land above, in walking back and fore across it, and skirting the edge of the range where it rises above the southern bay, so to speak, of the plain. This brought me as far as el-Mezar on the summit of the second peak; and beyond this, nothing seemed likely to be gained by going. Next morning I rode along the stony path that slants up to Nuris from Ain Jalud—the path, beyond a doubt, by which Gideon brought down the ten thousand whose courage and energy had been proved, that he might discover who of them were also intelligent and steady. This brought me to the rounded hill, projecting to the north-east as a sort of annexe to the general range, from which Gideon certainly observed how "the Midianites, and the Amalekites and all the children of the East lay

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Judges vii.

along in the valley like locusts for multitude," and on which I am satisfied that Saul fell upon his sword when he saw that victory was hopeless. I might have taken longer for my examination on this second day, but I had to visit Shunem, and Endor, and Nain, and to sleep that night on the summit of Mount Tabor. My dragoman was impatient, and I was not confident enough in my mere book-knowledge of the distances to insist upon my own estimate of the time that was available. However, I had got a fair working knowledge of the ground—probably a better knowledge of it than any other tourist whose whole stay in Palestine has been so short as mine.

There is a difficulty, however, in applying to the record such knowledge of the ground as I acquired, which I had not to encounter in the last two chapters. I had no need to contradict anyone in what I wished to say about Michmash and Elah. I know of no one but myself who even professes to explain these battles by careful description of the battlefields. If any study of the scene of either of them has been made, its results are not to be found in any volume which has come in my way; and I think I have read all the well-known works on Palestine, at all events in the English tongue. With Gilboa the case is different. There is an account of the battle in the delightful work which has done more than any other to make the English-speaking

public acquainted with the geography of the Holy Land. The Sinai and Palestine of Dean Stanley contains a It is suffidetailed description of Saul's last battle. ciently vivid, but I think that any competent observer who will take the pains to walk across the ground, will pronounce it not only erroneous but absurd. The Dean's description is copied in the guide-books, and is either quoted or reproduced without acknowledgment, as a thing so obvious as to be common property, in book after book on Palestine. He describes Saul's army as drawn up facing northward on the plain in front of Ain Jalud, and with its front and flanks alike unprotected. He speaks of the Philistines as breaking the ranks of Israel by a charge across the plain from Shunem, then of the mass of the fugitives streaming down the slope toward the Jordan, and of the few who continued to resist being slaughtered as they fled up the steep and stony hillsides on the south.

Such an account scarcely calls for criticism, it is so purely imaginary and so completely opposed not only to the topography but to every probability. But if one were to go into details one would like to have asked the Dean whether he gravely intended to imply that "the chariots and horsemen followed hard after" Saul, up a slope so steep that it is just possible to ascend it without assistance from the hands or from a staff—a slope that is broken in many places by

perpendicular steps two or three feet in height, and sprinkled everywhere with lumps of rock from four or five up to ten or twelve feet in diameter. This is only a specimen of the absurdities which Stanley's picturesque account involves. It is safe to say that no one who has stood upon the ground could have written such an account if he had tried to make a picture to himself of how an experienced general must of necessity have chosen his position. The idea of any leader having placed an army of brave but half-disciplined footmen upon a level field, at the bottom of a gentle slope, down which he knew that an overwhelming mass of chariots and well-trained horsemen would be hurled on them—and that, too, with a splendid position within twenty minutes walk is palpably absurd. Possibly at Gilboa Saul was not what he had been, any more than Napoleon at Waterloo. But there is no hint in any record that he had become a drivelling idiot. Even his occasional fits of frenzy had probably passed away. They had resulted from the internal struggle when he knew that he was falling away from duty and from God. Now that he had settled himself in his evil course, there was no longer anything to provoke them. As a mere general, he was probably more to be relied on than in most of the years since the victory at Elah. But even if Saul had become an idiot, there is no likelihood that the

free chiefs of Israel would have followed him to a field where the dullest would know that their only choice must be either to run away at once or to stand like sheep till they were slaughtered.

Yet people think so little for themselves, and are so ready to accept whatever is clothed in telling language, that this account of the battle of Gilboa will probably hold its ground in every English work on Palestine for a generation or two to come. I am perfectly aware that it will hold its ground against any effort I can make to correct it.

It is often instructive to see how blunders have arisen, especially when they are made by men who do not often blunder. Dean Stanley's thoughtlessness clearly took the direction that it did from two causes; the first perhaps natural and excusable, the second far from creditable to one who had undertaken to reproduce the substance of the ancient narrative.

The Israelites are said to have taken their position "by the fountain which is in Jezreel." Without understanding the difficulties in which he involved himself, Stanley appears to have taken the preposition by in its most literal sense, as if the army must have been in actual contact with the little lake. This is certainly not the sense in which the original writer meant it, nor is it even the sense which would occur most naturally to one looking at the narrative of a battle from

the proper military point of view. The word denotes no more than that "the fountain which is in Jezreel" supplied water to the army. It would necessarily do so to an army posted, as that of the Israelities clearly was, on the broken plateau above the lakelet. The fountain no doubt is on the plain, but so close beneath the hill, and so encompassed by rocks, that a small detachment could secure it against any attempts of the enemy to cut off the parties sent to draw water for the host above. To lowlanders, it may perhaps appear that an army could hardly be said to be by the fountain when separated from it by that steep and rugged slope. Mountaineers, like the Israelites, would reckon by a different standard. To them, it would be about as easy to carry water up the hillside as to carry it an equal distance across the plain. And though the way slants up a steep ascent, the actual distance from the fountain to the right wing of Saul's army—from which the water would be passed easily and quickly along his front—is very trifling. By careful use of my watch, I found that I needed just fourteen minutes to pass over it when walking at the pace at which I commonly walk up hills. Saul's water-carrying parties, being on special duty and better accustomed to climbing than I am, would hardly need more than ten minutes. An army on a table-land right above a spring from which they are supplied, and only ten

minutes walk away from it, would be described as in position by it, in any writing on military subjects which I have read. Still, this mistake of interpreting a preposition when used about an army in exactly the same sense as if it were applied to a solitary traveller, is not altogether unnatural.

The other source of Dean Stanley's error is less excusable. In flat contradiction to the original narrative, he makes the Philistines deliver the attack from Shunem. Through haste or carelessness, he did not observe how the writer of the Book of Samuel, with characteristic accuracy, notes that after the rendezvous at Shunem and the subsequent review, "the Philistines went up to Jezreel." The words certainly are few; but that is no reason for passing them entirely by. And there can hardly be a better instance of how too many books are written, than that not one of Stanley's numerous reproducers seems to have noticed his omission. Yet the omission makes all the difference in the world. If Saul had been posted where Stanley chooses to imagine, an attack from Shunem would have been natural. But in that case it would have been unnecessary for the Philistines "to go up to Jezreel." The fact that they did so is proof enough that Saul was posted elsewhere. An attack from Shunem would imply that the line of defence fronted north; and if the attack had been made from there the Israelites would have been drawn up—not indeed out upon the plain, where no one except a fool would place them—but on the line of heights above Ain Jalud. Such a position would have been impregnable in front, but so exposed on its left rear that a general like Saul could not have chosen it.

But it is superfluous to discuss anything on the supposition that the Philistines attacked from Shunem. The narrative which is our sole authority, expressly says that the attack was made from Jezreel. Now, an attack from Jezreel implies that Saul occupied the extremity of the table-land in which the mountains of Gilboa fall down into the plain, and that his army fronted west. That supposition, which to my mind is not so much suggested by the original account as expressly stated in it, makes everything perfectly clear.

The true position of the armies and the whole plan of the campaign will be best understood from the sketch of the country round Gilboa (page 151). It shows Shunem, the rendezvous of the Philistines, and Jenin (the ancient En-Gannim), where, if they once reached it in unbroken strength, they would find an easy ascent, by which even their chariots could attain the ridge that forms the backbone of the mountain home of Israel. But the map illustrates also the plan of defence which Saul had formed. His army held

the heights immediately above Ain-Jalud, on ground of which a more detailed sketch is given in the Plan of the Battle of Gilboa (p. 171). The Philistines could not pass on to Jenin without a danger to which I shall presently refer. They felt compelled to attack their enemy in the position he had chosen. Therefore they "went up to Jezreel," and from Jezreel they delivered the attack.

Now the fact that it was thus, and not otherwise, that the campaign developed itself and that Saul's last fight was fought, is a signal instance of how an acquaintance with minute details of Palestinian topography is often indispensable to those who wish to understand the history of the Chosen Race, and to receive the full moral influence which their history is fitted to exert.

For it is strange how small the openings sometimes are into large truths. It is strange how any line of thought or inquiry, if followed far enough, ends in some of the familiar principles, old yet ever new, which ought to be for all men the practical guides of life. It is like one of the runnels, too small to be dignified as yet with the name of brooks, which wind far up among the solitary hills. Take one of these to guide you. Follow its general direction, though here you have to cross the glen and there to breast the hillside. It will lead you soon or late to some brow

that overlooks the plain where herds feed, and fields are cultivated, and men dwell. It is the plain you have known long, and yet the sight seems new. Your route has brought you to an unaccustomed point of view. As you gaze, you get an idea of the plain's extent, and of its relations to the hills around it which you never had before.

It is thus with such mere topographical investigations as we have been engaged in. I began with the simple intention of describing the scenes of one or two famous battles, which deserve to be more famous than they are. It was inevitable to connect the account of these battles with the general history of Israel; and the discussion of that connection led, as inevitably, to an inquiry into the light it casts on the character of Saul and of those who, under him, fought their ever-memorable fight for freedom. And now, having traced down the story to Gilboa, we are full in view of great and familiar moral truths;—so full in view of them that it is difficult to refrain from looking thoughtfully at them for a moment.

The truths are such as these. The noblest gifts, the most favourable circumstances, and—more solemn still—the utmost devotion to duty in certain of its phases,—they all lead only to destruction, when the right path, the straight and narrow path, is not persevered in to the end. The turning point, after which destruction

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becomes inevitable, may not be in every case the breach of any positive rule or law. It may be not so much a deliberate refusal to do something known to be right, as—it was so in the case of Saul—a holding back from higher levels of thought and higher principles of action than are required from common men. "To whom much is given, of them also much shall be required." And, yet again, when the fatal decision has once been made, the will becomes rapidly set on ever lower aims, and steps are taken which are seen by the cool observer to be certain to result in the disappoinment of these lower aims themselves. It is he that "seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteouness" that has "other things" added to him. He that seeks for the other things first, loses the highest prize of all, and loses, at the same time, the lower things which he has hoped to gain. Such is the inner constitution of the world. It may not appear on the surface; but it is so in reality always, and it becomes clearly apparent sometimes. Never perhaps more clearly than in the ruin of one so gifted, so full of high and generous feeling, so devoted through long years to the highest cause of which he knew, so successful up to a certain point in working out good for his country and for mankind, as Saul.

To me, these truths have received a new enforcement from the single fact that Saul fought his last battle at Gilboa. For the motives that brought him there are written broad across the features of the land. Let me endeavour to explain my meaning.

It is easy to see how such a plan of invasion as that which the Philistines had formed, would be met by a king to whom the preservation of the nation's life was everything. The central ridge which runs south from Jenin, and which Saul had especially to defend, is no smooth table-land, but broken and rugged, and twisted about between the often overlapping heads of the valleys which run down from it towards the Jordan on the east and the plain and the Mediterranean on the west. It presents position after position against which chariots could do little, and in which the progress of the invaders might have been blocked as it had been at Elah. If defeated in one such position, or manœuvred out of it, so as to be forced to abandon some portion of the land to ravage, the defenders could find another position to retire to. Even without reckoning the hope of divinely providential aid which might make the defence unexpectedly successful, it would be long before an enemy, however strong, could make his way along that route to the centre of the nation's life in Benjamin. And while Benjamin was unsubdued, there might be disaster, but there could not be ruin.

Instead of acting thus on the defensive, Saul went

beyond his proper confines to a position that was strong in itself but where retreat was scarcely possible, and where defeat would ensure destruction. Across the plain which encircles three sides of the projecting ridge of Gilboa, a broken army could never make its way in the face of the chariots of the Philistines. By the eight or ten miles of the circling peninsula of hills, some remnants of the Israelites, should they be defeated, might possibly regain their southern mountains; but long before they could reach them, the end of the central ridge at Jenin would be in possession of the victors. Once it was so, the whole line of defence would be broken, and the strength of the hills would be turned against those whom it should have been the means of saving. And the possibility of such retreat, even for fragments of a defeated army, was but doubtful. Within a few miles of the worst pass that an army retreating along the Gilboa range must traverse, was the strong Philistine garrison of Bethshan. That garrison would not be left without orders, and pretty certainly not without such reinforcements as would enable it to act with vigour. A detachment of it might hold the passes in the rear of the Israelites, so that the escape of any orderly portion of a beaten army could be made very nearly hopeless. In such a position, defeat could scarcely amount to less than the complete loss of the campaign, and the probable destruction of the

nation. What then was the motive of Saul in posting his army as he did? His action was that of the garrison of a fortress that should sally out with all its force to meet intending besiegers in some place whence they could not regain their defences if defeated. If a garrison acted thus, we should understand that they reckoned themselves equal to the enemy, and were bent on a fair trial of strength upon a field where the result, whatever it might be, should be once for all decisive. So it was with Saul. Defeat at the point of the Gilboa range would be fatal to Israel, but it would be not less fatal to the Philistines. them routed and pursued along the plain as they had been at Elah, few would make their way through the passes of Mount Carmel, and still fewer would regain their distant home. Bethshan might at least be starved into surrender. The whole plain would be added to the kingdom, and the obstacle would be removed which had hitherto prevented its extension into the hills of Galilee beyond. Saul's dominion would be well-nigh doubled at a stroke.

It is true that, in the light of the result, we can see that such visions were but wild. Indeed, Saul might have seen this for himself. In spite of himself, he probably felt it in his heart. His army was not what it had been at Elah. His kingdom was disaffected and disorganised. Many of his nobles, some even of Ben-

jamin itself, had by this time entered into relations with the outlaw of Bethlehem. The news had almost certainly reached Saul before the battle, of how seven chieftains of Manasseh had joined the band which David had led back from the invading army¹. Yet desperate though the chance might be, Saul regarded it as his last. Victory might yet re-establish everything. It would reconcile the disaffected. It would gratify the lust of power which had become his own and his tribe's all-engrossing passion. And if victory was not to be his lot, he judged it well to take such a post that he might not survive to bear the consequences of defeat.

The feeling that now dominated the man to whom a new heart had once been given, and on whom the Spirit from above had been in no stinted measure poured, has been well caught by the modern poet, who puts these words into his mouth as the close of his address before his latest battle:

> "Bright be the diadem, boundless the sway, Or kingly the death that awaits us to-day."

To one who judges by a European, and still more to one who judges by an Indian standard, any sway that could be won by victory at Gilboa appears far short of boundless. The plain of Esdraelon and the moun-

<sup>11</sup> Chronicles xii. 20-21.

tain land beyond it, are at most some fifteen hundred square miles—similar in extent to a medium-sized English county, or to two or three taluqs of a South Indian Collectorate. But it is the feelings of Saul to which the poet gives utterance. Such extension of dominion as a victory at Gilboa might secure, would appear magnificent to anyone in the days when states were so diminutive as those of Phœnicia or Greece, much more to one whose ideas had been formed in the narrow glens of Benjamin. It is by the standard of the land which is the least of all lands, that judgment must proceed in matters of the kind. And many a one makes shipwreck of his life, through deliberate unfaithfulness to duty and to God like Saul's, for a smaller fragment of what earth can yield than the sway which he risked everything to gain.

But if the map be studied, nothing more should be required to show that in choosing his position at Gilboa, Saul gave the clearest proof that it was the establishment and extension of his own power, not the welfare of Israel or the furtherance of God's cause, that he had set his heart upon securing. His whole line of action would have been exactly parallelled—though the mere military operation would have been on a larger scale,—if Bruce, when he went to meet the host that fought at Bannockburn, had crossed the border to take up a position with a strong English

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fortress in his rear, in the hope that by a decisive victory he might successfully re-assert his country's claims to Cumberland and the adjoining fragments of the ancient kingdom of Strathclyde. King Robert better knew what duty he was summoned in providence to discharge. He chose his position of defence where he did not stake all upon the issue of a single day. Bannockburn might have been lost. The disaster would have been terrible; but Scotland would not necessarily have been lost along with it. Scott indeed makes the Bruce declare:

"Upon this chosen battle-plain, Victor or vanquished I remain."

But these are the words of a modern poet, influenced by the later and less noble developments of chivalry. There is no reason to believe that they express the real sentiments of the man who made Scotland free. Had Bannockburn been lost, Bruce would no more have yielded to despair than Wallace after Falkirk. But, because he was not misled by rash ambition like King Saul, that question was never put to proof. By victory at the place where duty and not ambition determined that the great battle should be fought, Scotland had her path laid open to contribute whatever she could contribute by her separate national life,—whatever by her life still so largely separate she may

contribute in days to come—to the right development of the history of man.

What Saul desired was a fair stand-up fight with the Philistines, to determine once for all whether he or they should be supreme within the land. He had what he wanted, and the result we know. If providence had not preserved a new spring of life and a shelter for the nation's faith in Judah, the sun of Israel would have set and the world's great hope have perished.

My views as to the significance of the battle occurring where it did, are honestly the impressions left with me by study of the ground. They are not prejudgments which I carried with me to it. On the contrary, they are opposed to what I believed until I stood upon the spot. I did not believe till then that Saul had so lost the sense of his lofty calling as to be willing with open eyes to wager the existence of the nation he had formed, and the cause of God which he knew to be bound up with it, against a chance of winning for himself an extension of vulgar power. I used to find fault with the sentiment which Byron, as has been noted, puts into the mouth of the death-doomed hero. I used to maintain that to the last there was a strain of deep loyalty to Israel, if not to Israel's God, in Saul; and that the catastrophe of Gilboa was caused only indirectly by his errors. It is simply my study

of the locality that compels me to admit that historically, and not poetically alone, Byron is wholly in the right.

But Saul's generalship had not deserted him, though the end for which he used it was a mean one. In part, it was the fitness of Gilboa for his purpose that induced him to fix on it as the scene of a decisive struggle. For such a fair stand-up fight as he so mistakenly desired,—for a listed field in which one of the two combatants must perish,—he could hardly have found in Palestine such an admirable position. It flanked the obviously intended line of march of the invaders. It is true that they could have passed it by and gone southward at once by Jenin. There were few left to resist them in front if they had determined to take this course. But the risk would have been too great. Their left flank at first, and their rear as they marched on, would have been open to attack. For the few miles of their march across the plain to Jenin, their chariots would no doubt have been a protection; but no general would entangle himself among hills, leaving an unbroken army, that had seldom and perhaps never been defeated, so close upon his rear. Saul calculated, and calculated correctly, that the Philistines would feel constrained to attack him in the position he had chosen. And it was a position which they had a fair hope of attacking with success. That it

should be so was an element in his plans. Had it been a position manifestly too strong to be assailed directly, his object would not have been gained. In that case there would have been delay, through which, in the discouragement and dissension that prevailed, there was no hope that the Israelites would show the steadiness they had displayed at Elah. For the purposes of Saul, it was necessary that some fair prospect of speedy success should induce the enemy to attack at once, and to attack in such a way that they might be either thoroughly victorious or thoroughly defeated. could not afford to wait. Nor had he to wait long. Some few days-passed—to all appearance five1 during which the armies watched each other; the Israelites motionless on the extremity of Gilboa, the Philistines with their headquarters at Jezreel but

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See I Samuel xxx. 1–17, and 2 Samuel i. 2. On his return from the Philistines, whom he left when they "went up to Jezreel," David took three days to reach Ziklag. Either two or three days must be assigned for his pursuit and destruction of the band of plunderers. It was on the third day after his return from this pursuit that the Amalekite who reported the death of Saul, arrived. Thus the news of the battle reached David on the eighth, or more probably the ninth, day after the Philistines took possession of the hill of Jezreel. The Amalekite would probably take the same time as David's band, viz., three days, in making the journey to Ziklag. If on the one hand he could travel faster than an army, yet on the other his purpose required him to travel secretly and therefore by unfrequented paths, and slowly. One day must be deducted as the day of the battle, leaving either five days or four as the time spent by the Philistines in preparing for it at Jezreel.

manœuvring on the plain and preparing their attack. It was then that despondency settled down upon the king. He was seeking now only military success and trusting to nothing beyond military power. And the balance of military force was terribly against him. From his elevated post, he could see how overwhelming was the strength in which the enemy had assembled, and how small was the probability that he could withstand their assault when it should be made. memory awoke of that earlier and better time when he had access to a higher wisdom than his own, and could feel assured, even in extremity, that Israel would not be utterly destroyed. Hence his longings for some sign from God. Hence his frantic endeavours to re-open the communication which he himself had Hence that sad despairing journey across the plain to Endor, of which such a full and such a strange account has been preserved by the historian.1

The journey was one of no special danger. Down to Ain Jalud and beyond it, the ground was part of his position. Thence there were but three miles of open plain before the shelter of the northern hills was reached. And there was reason to expect that the journey would escape the notice of the enemy, whose main body was now to the south of Jezreel, massed in front of the Israelite position, and who had no longer

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel xxviii. 8-25.

any motive for particularly observing the central portion of the plain. Still it was prudent to make the journey after dark. By day, the route to Endor would be full in view from the headquarters of the Philistines. It is the ground upon which, in a later age, the approach of Jehu was observed so long before he came to the then royal residence of Jezreel. And there was the risk, besides, of encountering parties that might be passing between the invading army and the garrison of Bethshan.

With what occurred at Endor, we are not here concerned. For our present purpose it is enough that, on the morning when the attack was delivered, Saul was back in the position on Gilboa prepared to defend it to the last.

The nature of that position will be made plain by the accompanying plan of the ground (p. 171). As in other cases, the chief features of the plan are drawn from the great Survey Map of Western Palestine. For everything, however, except the configuration of the ground and the location of the four unquestioned sites which are named, I am myself responsible. Of course I am solely responsible for the line along which I have represented the army of Saul as drawn up. It is marked A B on the plan.

It is beyond doubt, to my mind, that the Israelites
<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings ix. 17-23.

held, as the plan exhibits, the extremity of this table-land, which may be most fitly regarded as the ending of the Gilboa range. No doubt the broad flat mound of Jezreel, beyond the table-land at its north-western corner, may be regarded as a portion of Gilboa if one chooses. That is a mere question of nomenclature. But there is a valley between the table-land and Jezreel; and into that valley Saul's position did not extend. Jezreel was held by the Philistines, and from Jezreel they directed their attack.

The ridge which Saul had thus to defend stretches for about a mile and a half from the place where its northern corner looks down on the central portion of the plain of Esdraelon, till it is flanked upon the south by the two southern fingers of Gilboa. The top of the ridge, and the ground immediately behind it, is almost level; yet the ridge is much higher at its northern than at its southern end. A ridge thus approximately horizontal at its summit, yet far from horizontal at its base, seems a little curious. Yet it is not difficult to explain how it comes to be so. The central portion of the plain, that which skirts the north of the Gilboa range and expands into the valley of the Jordan, begins at Jezreel to slope rapidly towards the river. On the other hand, the bay of the plain which is inclosed between Gilboa and the main mass of the hills of Israel, slopes upwards as it stretches to the east.

Where the cross valley between the hill of Jezreel and Gilboa connects the southern bay with the proper plain, there is already a considerable difference in the elevation of the two. Thus the ridge that forms the blunt finish of Gilboa, stands much higher above the transverse valley at its northern than at its southern end. Where it unites with the projecting fingers at the south, it is not more than twenty feet above the ground from which it rises, while at its northern corner it must be seventy. And as the ridge becomes higher above the valley, its slope regularly increases; until at the north end, opposite Jezreel, it may almost be termed precipitous. Saul therefore did not require to stretch his line of battle along the whole of the western end of the peninsula of hills. For part of the way, the natural defence was ample. His right flank also was practically unassailable. The line of heights round by Ain Jalud can in almost every place be ascended without difficulty by a single man. But the slope is so steep and rugged that regular troops, marching in order, would not attempt it,—certainly not when there was much easier access close at hand. A few scouts and skirmishers would sufficiently keep watch from Ain Jalud round to the point where the extreme right of the army of Israel is marked upon the plan. South of this, Saul's difficulties as a general began. The ridge is about as steep in most places, but everyGILBOA. 197

where lower than the ridge at Elah. It was steep enough and high enough to make an onset of the dreaded chariots almost impossible, and to give a decided advantage to the defenders. Their advantage, however, diminished steadily towards their left; and nowhere along the ground which I have marked as occupied by the Israelites, is it so great as to make a determined assault manifestly hopeless. There are, moreover, two points along the line where access is comparatively easy. They are those where the two streamlets are marked as flowing westward to the plain.

It can be only after heavy rain that there are any streamlets there, and even then their course is so short and the declivity so gentle that they have little excavating power. I found corn growing right across their beds for a breadth of some forty yards when I passed along the ridge. At both places, however, the flow of water has slightly cut the ridge away and made a gentle and easy descent into the vale below. At both places, if there were no artificial obstacle, it would be possible for chariots to penetrate into the heart of the Israelites' position. But on the day of battle, these passages would certainly be defended by breastworks, or by trenches, or by both. Saul had plenty of time to make his position as strong as it could be made, and he would omit no military precaution that was

known to his country and his age. I do not believe it was at either of these points that his line of defence was broken. The weakest point of the position is its extreme left. There, where the ridge is lowest, the access from the plain is broad and easy. There, regular soldiers could deliver an attack without breaking their ranks or falling into disorder, and chariots could ascend without much difficulty. In fact, for a hundred and fifty yards or more, the ridge breaks down into a mere rounded and gentle slope. At this point, where the natural defence has almost disappeared, artificial defences would be multiplied. And the defenders had a natural advantage of an indirect kind, of which I am certain that Saul availed himself. Beyond his immediate left, at the junction of the two fingers, as I have termed the narrow projecting spurs, there is a steep hill, which rises to a much greater height than the table-land on which the Israelites were It commands the weak portion of their line. It is so near that its slope is well within the distance at which a slingstone or an arrow would take effect. Now, it is known that the Israelites, and the men of Benjamin in particular, were expert in the use of missiles, and that the bow was the favourite weapon of Jonathan himself. On the slope of this hill, close above the endangered left but on ground so steep and lofty that they could not be attacked themselves,

a body of archers and slingers would certainly be stationed. They could pour their volleys on the flank of those who assailed the entrenchments, and would be a valuable addition to the force of the defence at the most doubtful point along the line. The place where I believe that they were posted is marked C upon the plan. Beyond this, towards the south and east, the hills are, not indeed precipitous, but so steep and high that no attack in that quarter was to be feared. The whole of that portion of Mount Gilboa would be neglected by the tacit consent of both sides.

I admit that in what I have said as to the position taken up by Saul, and in what I have still to say about the progress of the battle, there is an element of conjecture and uncertainty. The original account does not furnish materials by itself on which detailed description may be based. Yet I cannot understand the original account, now that I have seen the ground by which it must be interpreted, as meaning anything but what I make it mean. I have considered other views but have not adopted them, because some part or other of the brief statement in the Books of Samuel seems sufficient to disprove them.

There are few things I should like so much as that one more competent than I am should examine the ground with care. I have little doubt that some accomplished tactician will do this ere long. It may

well be that he will arrive at results not exactly the same as mine; but I shall be surprised if his investigation does not show my views to be substantially correct. It is only because the narrative appears to be quite cleared up by the scene where the events occurred, that I venture with so much confidence to describe the battle in detail.

It is probable that the attack began early in the morning. Several days had been spent in preparing for it. Everything was ready. The Philistine generals knew well that resistance would be stubborn. With the rugged ground in their foemen's rear, they would wish to have as much light as possible for following up any success that might be gained. They had carefully surveyed all of the ground that they could study from the plain; and I have no doubt that their main endeavour from the first was to break in upon the left of the defenders. Opposite that point, they would mass their chief force of infantry and of chariots. There alone there was room enough to use every arm effectively at once. The outlying band of archers and slingers was full in view and could plainly do much to annoy the assailing column. But they could only annoy it: not baffle it or hurl it back. ground where they were posted was too steep for a downward charge, even if troops of that kind could be trusted to charge into the plain. Subsidiary attacks

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would be made all along the line, particularly at the two narrow depressions where chariots might possibly ascend. The direction of the main Philistine attack is indicated on the plan by the dotted line ab, that of the two chief subsidiary attacks by the dotted lines ac and ad.

Saul doubtless had immediate command upon his right. The right was the customary place for the general-in-chief in all ancient armies of which descriptions have come down to us; and the events of the day seem to make it certain that at Gilboa the ordinary rule was followed. Jonathan, as most fit to play the part of leader in actual combat, would be in charge upon the left, and would keep a watchful eye on the defenders of the outlying spur. As to other arrangements, there is nothing that I know of to direct conjecture. Nor are there materials for judging how long the struggle may have lasted. But I have little doubt that hours were spent before the defences on the left were broken down; and that time after time the assailants were driven back into the plain. But numbers and discipline prevailed at last. A way was forced through all obstruction into the heart of the position. Ere then the archers would pour down from their vantage ground and reinforcements from the centre would be hurried up. Once and again, perhaps, when victory seemed within their grasp, the Philistines found that the assault must be renewed. It was here, as I conceive, that Jonathan met a soldier's death, and that his brothers Abinadab and Malchi-shua fell beside him. I cannot prove this, if any one choses to deny it. But to my mind it is certain that while Jonathan lived, with any companions of his youth and of his wars around him, no Philistine passed beyond that corpse-encumbered ridge.

It was a thing never to be forgotten to stand amidst the corn that waved green and high upon the spot where the purest minded soldier who has found a place in all the long annals of his people gave up his soul, amid the turmoil of the fight, to the God whom he had served so well. Jonathan may not have had the varied powers of his wonderfully gifted friend. It may have been in part the limitation of his powers that shielded him from sins and errors like those into which David fell. We may think as we choose of this. But certain it is that there is no one of whom history has preserved so full an account, whose record is so absolutely unstained—no one to whom the words may be so well applied:

"He had kept

The whiteness of his life, therefore men o'er him wept."

When Jonathan and his brothers had fallen, the left wing of the defence gave way. But the passage up to the table-land was but narrow. Time was needed to fill up the trenches and clear away the relics of the breastworks so as to let the chariots move on. There was, therefore, still an opportunity for the unbroken portion of Saul's army to retreat.

The historian tells of an account of the battle brought by a certain Amalekite to David. The statement which this account was intended to lead up to was a false one; but that is no reason for regarding it as inaccurate in itself. On the contrary, the Amalekite's purpose would be best served by scrupulous accuracy in his narrative of the battle. Combining his account with that which the historian supplies directly, we can make out sufficiently what followed.

As soon as he knew that the defence was crushed upon his left, Saul withdrew his men. There were positions higher up, in which, if he could but occupy them in time, effective defence might be prolonged. One such position, not indefensible against chariots, is marked D E in the accompanying sketch. There is another position still further to the rear, stretching from the outlying hill already referred to up to el-Mezar, against which chariots could do nothing. It is marked F G upon the plan. If a new line of defence could be taken up in either position, and if the Philistines could be brought to attack it in all the disorder of quick pursuit, it was by no means

impossible even yet that the final victory might rest with Israel. The question was whether either position could be reached and occupied in time. A few chariots might be soon hurled forward in pursuit of the defeated left; but for some brief interval they could not be brought up in such force as to make any impression on the still unbroken right. Saul in person directed the retreat. His stately person fixed the gaze of the Amalekite,—who was probably one of the lightarmed skirmishers whom the Philistine commanders hurried on to retard as much as possible the movements of the enemy. He tells how Saul "leaned upon his spear," watching his men as they passed rapidly to the rear, while "the chariots and the horsemen followed hard after him." The right reached the position which they wished to gain. But could the left, with the fierce pursuers pressing ever closer, rally upon the ground which it was needful they should hold? Jonathan survived the thing might have been done, and the battle even yet have been restored. Philistines had not had time to get so far in any absolutely overpowering force. But as it was, the fugitives fled on. Their attempts, if they made any attempt, to hold the ground assigned to them, were vain. As soon as the pursuers came up in force, resistance ceased upon the left; and the flank of what remained of the army of Israel was accordingly laid

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bare for their assault. All hope of maintaining either of the lines of defence was gone.

Even a cursory examination of the sketch will show that, by the failure of the left wing to establish itself where defence could be still maintained, the retreat of the Israelites was cut off. The Philistines had won the crest of the hill and had pinned their enemy to the northern slope, where they were hopelessly separated from their own land. A determined effort before the main body of the pursuers could come up, might still have opened up a way of escape for some considerable relics of the army. But for this Saul had no spirit left. Nor, for himself, had he any inclination to escape. His men doubtless knew his state of mind too well to expect from him any effort of the His passion for power had come to be so widely known that even the Amalekite gave plausibility to his tale by saying that "he was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen." When it was seen that the Philistines were established on the ground where the left of the Israelites should have rallied, all who sought to escape, whether from love of life or from the wish to be of service to their country in its time of need, would break away from Saul and make a hasty flight along the northern slope till they reached some portion of the crest to which the enemy had not yet extended their array—thence to scatter with

their tale of woe through all the valleys of Ephraim and Manasseh. For Saul, and whatever portion of his army retained coherence round him, no course remained but to draw back to that steeper central part of the outlying hill, which is marked H upon the plan. There no chariots could approach him; but there also his defence could not be protracted. He was cut off from water and supplies. He would be surrounded on all sides, except the steep, impracticable descent into the plain, as soon as the enemy saw how matters It is probable that only a fragment of his army had disdained to flee. But among those who remained, were doubtless nearly all the trained warriors of Benjamin who had not fallen by the side of Scant though their number may have been, they gathered close around their king. We do not know how long they held off the Philistines after their full strength had been brought up. We do not even know whether attacks were made upon the hill where they proudly stood at bay. The probabilities are about equally balanced. That Saul was with the body of their enemies who showed so resolute a front on the spur to which the progress of the fight had pushed them, would soon be known to the commanders of the Philistines. It may be that they cared little for the scattered fugitives now making their way along the heights, and deemed it best to bend

all their energies on the destruction of their mighty enemy and his veterans—the only possible nucleus of continued resistance, as they would probably suppose. If they thus judged, then they sent on column after column, only to be hurled back broken and disgraced until their soldiers would breast that fatal steep no longer. But it may be, too, that counsels more cautious prevailed, and that the Philistine generals directed their main efforts against the fugitives, merely surrounding the hill with a cordon of their soldiers for the time, content to know that the Lion of Benjamin was safe within their toils at last.

Some details have, however, been preserved. We know that, whether without direct attack or after all attacks had been repulsed, the relics of the host of Israel were beset on all sides by Philistine archers, till Saul saw his comrades falling man by man around him, and till he himself was either wounded or worn out with agony and toil. He had no slingers or archers to defend his line. These were light armed troops who would naturally be the first to flee. Besides, he had stationed such troops upon his left, where their services were most required; and his left was the first portion of the army to be crushed. We further know that from whatever hour in the afternoon the Philistines got possession of the field until darkness fell, and all through the night that

followed, no foeman's foot trod upon the hilltop where the last scene of King Saul's great tragedy was enacted. It was not till the morning that his fate and the full extent of the Philistine victory was discovered. We also know what the last scene on the hilltop was. When nightfall gave temporary relief from the missiles of the enemy, the thinned but dauntless circle assembled for the last time round the king. His one remaining thought was for his own glory. At least he would escape the humiliation of being jeered at in his ruin and slain by the hands of the uncircumcised. And he said "to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took his sword, and fell upon it. And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he likewise fell upon his sword, and died with him."

It is not said in the original account, but I think it is implied, that in their self-destruction Saul and his armour-bearer were not alone. Such chiefs as were still beside him and were fully sharers of his spirit, were likely to make themselves sharers in his fate. Some common men who had been faithful to the last may have now endeavoured to escape. They would climb down the rugged slope into the northern plain

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while darkness lasted; some to be slain by the parties of the enemy on watch, some to cross into the Galilean hills, some perhaps to steal past Bethshan unperceived and see once more their southern homes. But of the chiefs and those who stood nearest them, not a few would follow the example that had been set. And so, ere midnight, there was silence on the blood-stained hill where the founders of the commonwealth of Israel lay cold in death—a sight to please a Roman, a sight how tragically sad to those who know that duty, not honour, is the guide of life, and that self-seeking even in its fairest and most gallant form is the spirit's certain death.

There was one of the light troops on guard around the hill who guessed the meaning of the silence. He was an Amalekite, trained in the warfare of the desert; more at home, therefore, than any native Philistine among those rugged hills. He crept upwards to observe. He found the mighty king now guarded only by the dead—found him possibly with some lingering signs of life to which he put an end, thereby, perhaps, suggesting to himself the tale that his was the hand that slew him. He thought that the great opportunity of his life had come. He despoiled the majestic corpse of the kingly diadem and bracelet, and making sure of great reward, dropped down the hill and made the best speed he could with his prize to David.

With the reward he got, or with the insults heaped by the Philistines on the bodies of their princely foes, and the gallant rescue of these bodies from disgrace, we are not here concerned. But we cannot part from Saul without calling to mind once more, even in full view of the corruption of his inner life and the ruin which his errors wrought, how priceless his services had been to his people and to mankind. Without him, Benjamin would never have expanded into Israel. Without him, that strong national life would never have been awakened which enabled Abner to maintain the war from beyond the Jordan, and in five years after what seemed irremediable disaster to make central Palestine free once more. And when David took the leadership of Israel, it was on the foundations laid by Saul that he built the stately fabric of political and military power within which the seeds of moral and spiritual life were sheltered, until, in the fulness of time, the fruit of their development through the centuries was reaped. No man knew this better than David himself. He showed how well he knew it by that famous elegy in which there is no allusion to the hero's moral fall any more than to the treatment accorded to himself—the elegy which, with generosity only equalled by his wisdom, he directed to be sung everywhere in Judah, in order that his tribe might feel deeply and for ever

how much the nation owed to those who had fallen on Gilboa. The poem is necessarily stripped in a translation of its original melody of words, and the music is for ever lost that fixed it in men's memories and made a way for it to their hearts. Yet, deprived of all adventitious aid although it be, and with nothing to recommend it beyond the simple pathos of its meaning, I do not envy the man who, when he calls the history to mind, does not recognise in it the noblest, the tenderest, the most truth-burdened utterance of sorrow that ever burst from a poet's heart. For the sake of readers who have not been familiar with its strains from childhood, I may be permitted to quote it as I close.

"Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places, How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,

Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon:

Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice.

Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa,

Let their be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings:

For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away, The shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, The bow of Jonathan turned not back, And the sword of Saul returned not empty.
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet with delights,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!

O Jonathan slain upon thy high places!
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!"

## CHAPTER VII.

## SHILOH.

I have said nearly all that I mean to say about my brief visit to the Holy Land. No doubt I could write a great deal more, and perhaps could write things as well worth reading as are to be found in many of the books that have been written about the country. But I have no mind to go on writing when all I should be likely to say is in print already. What I have said hitherto has been honestly my own. Some of it may have been said, and better said, by others. Perhaps some of it has been suggested rather by what I read long ago than by what I saw recently. But for what I have said, I am not conscious of indebtedness to any one. If my book were made much longer, I should begin to say what I know to have been said already; and this I feel no call to do.

I may still be indulged, however, with a closing chapter on a place of which the situation and the present state brought the whole course of Israel's history before me in an aspect both sorrowful and new. It is a place that, more than any other in the land, awakens the sad thoughts which are never far away if we

rightly study any portion of the tangled history of a fallen world, and which are particularly near when we review the history of the race which should have been the joy of all the earth, but which has ended by becoming for milleniums a curse and a mockery among men.

The thoughts suggested by names like Bethel or Samaria, or, above all, Jerusalem, are sad enough. Yet they tell of a line of action along which, amid whatever sin and failure, there was unintermitted contention for godliness and truth,—along which something was wrought out which has been woven into the divine plan, which has never ceased to bear fruit on earth and is destined to bear nobler fruit in all those coming stages and spheres of being of which earth is the appointed seed-plot. With Shiloh the case is different. Doubtless the history which its name recalls had its purpose and its uses; but to the student of history, they are utterly obscure. We must pass out of the sphere of the historian into that of the theologian in order to catch so much even as a glimpse of them. The Israel of which Shiloh was the centre—the Israel of Joshua and the Judges—was a total failure. Its influence passed wholly into nothing. But for the new order inaugurated by Samuel, moulded and strengthened by Saul, and established solidly by David, the chosen race must have perished, so that Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, would be no more to us than the

nameless chiefs whose tombs, spread wide on the lonely hillsides of Armenia and Kurdistan, are now their sole memorials.

The history from Joshua to Samuel, is one of continual and steady degradation. It is relieved, no doubt, by bursts of faith and valour; but, so far as our scanty materials enable us to judge, each outburst when it came found the people in a more hopeless state than the one before it. And, speaking roughly, each of them was in itself a meaner and a weaker thing than its Gideon may have been greater than predecessor. Barak; but there is reason to believe that he elevated the character and purposes of the people less. And with the great names that come after Gideon's, the falling off is manifest and great. Jephthah was little more than a rough freebooter, in whom such faith in the God of his fathers as he had could scarcely struggle into half-formed shape. And the deeds of Samson are those of one on whom a higher mood came rarely, and whose faith could never embody itself in steady purpose. Such as they were, his deeds did not touch the popular heart, or rouse the energy even of his own With those who fought for Israel in the days of Eli, the lowest depth is reached. In the weak old man himself, there was still some spark of devotion to Jehovah and his cause; but, from all around him, the last relics of reverence, and noble purpose, and moral life were gone. On the fatal day when the glory departed and the ark of God was taken, the Israel that drew its life from Shiloh fell as completely as Saxon England had fallen when Duke William's meal was spread in the place of slaughter at nightfall of the day of Saint Calixtus.

And it fell to rise no more. The community that was set free at Ebenezer and made unconquerable at Michmash, was indeed somewhat more than its successor. In a true though secondary sense, it was its continuation, or rather its revival. It reproduced something of what had been best in the spirit of the earlier commonwealth. It carried on with it through the ages much of the priceless heritage of law and thought and feeling which had been communicated through Moses and upheld by Joshua.

So, also,—as living historians have untiringly been teaching us—Saxon England did not entirely pass away. Much of its temper, many of its institutions, lived on through ages of depression, till they came again to view and took the foremost place in making England what it is. But, in the one case as in the other, the new organism was politically and historically a separate thing from the old. Samuel most probably saw to it that the old name was revived, when, piece by piece, the race began to regain its freedom

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel ii. 17, 22.

And in seeing to this he did well and wisely. From the point of view of the theologian, who sees in all the political changes only various stages in the divine training of the seed of Abraham, the name is as legitimately applied to the new nation as the old. But if merely historical considerations had prevailed with Samuel, or with those who in later ages have been the chief students of this history, some other name than the old would be in use for the community which Samuel and Saul set free, and which David moulded into the people of the Lord. Thus, where purely historical considerations have prevailed, an irresistible instinct has made men feel—and they will feel, let recent teachers protest against it as they may,—that if "English" is to be the accepted term for the people (and for their tongue), into which Saxon, and Angle, and Dane, and Norman, have been fused, some other term, whether accurate or not, must be employed for the race whose leadership passed away at Senlac.

Though the name of Israel endured, the old Israel had as surely perished as the dominion of those whom we term the "Saxons." And because it perished, Shiloh, which was the centre of its life, comes back into the field of history no more. An old prophet lived once amongst its ruins, else its name would not appear in the annals of the land again. Thence-

forward it is referred to only as a symbol of the ruin that is sure to come on those who, placed in a position to do some mighty good and gifted with all that is necessary for doing it, prefer the path of selfindulgence to the thorny path of effort and of trial. "Go ye now," exclaimed Jeremiah, in days when the new Israel, or what remained of it, came nearest to such utter faithlessness as was seen in the old when corruption wrought its fall,—"Go ye now, saith the Lord, unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I caused my name to dwell at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel; and now . . . will I do to the house which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, . . . as I have done to Shiloh." It is worth while to make some acquaintance with the place which is such an emphatic enforcement of a lesson not unneeded by those who have God's work to do in our day.

There is no doubt as to its site. The modern Seilun is the ancient Shiloh. Its situation agrees so perfectly with everything known about the place where the ark was placed by Joshua, that, since it was known how the old name still clung to the locality, it has been held universally and unhesitatingly to be identical with Shiloh.

As one journeys north through what was once the territory of Ephraim, along the road which has kept

in every age as near as it conveniently can to the summit of the central ridge, a steepish and nearly continuous range rises for several miles upon the right. It is the watershed at this point between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. About eight miles north of Bethel, a broad and pleasant valley interrupts this range. You leave the main track and turn eastward through the valley. A few minutes ride along it brings you to a little plain, which seems suddenly to thrust back the watershed some miles towards the east. You have rounded the southern end of a screen of soft green hills which, for three miles or more, takes up the line of the watershed and fences off from the common highway the secluded spot where Jehovah's abode was reared, "in Shiloh his bright sanctuary." The little plain within, is irregular in shape. Strictly speaking, it is not much above two miles in length, and still less in breadth. But at each of its corners on the right a valley slopes down to it from the east; and at each corner on the left a corresponding valley slopes down from it to the west; and the slope on both sides is so gentle that the portions of these valleys which adjoin the plain may be considered extensions of it if one chooses. The plain is peculiarly level. The hills, as it winds along their base, seem rather set upon it than rising out of it. It looks as if a line could be drawn round most

of it, touching the point where the plain ends and the hills begin. At the north-eastern corner, at the mouth of the valley which there enters the central basin, there rises a considerable hillock, joined by a little isthmus-like declivity to the hills upon the north. The hillock is crowned with the ruins of buildings not many generations old; and in what were once the courtyards of the houses, and in some cases on the former housetops, there grows a scanty crop of illtended corn. On that lonely mound, now ploughed like a field, there is no room to doubt that the place of worship—whether it was tabernacle or temple stood of old-that place of worship, which should have been, and might have been, the source of moral strength to all the nations of the world. The site suggests a permanent building rather than a temporary tent; and though the popular idea be that a tabernacle continued to be the only shelter of the ark through all the period of the Judges, there is some reason to believe that a building had taken its place in Shiloh; not indeed such a building as Solomon erected at Jerusalem, but something more substantial than was in use when the people and the ark were wanderers in the wilderness. Doubtless the abodes of the priests clustered close around the little hill. When assemblies and feasts were held, the tents of Israel were spread along the plain beneath it.

When the visitor sees how the town was situated, he sees also at a glance how, on the fatal day when Shiloh fell, the first intimation of calamity that came to the High Priest, though he had stationed himself where he expected to be the first to hear whatever news might come, was the sound of lamentation in the town behind him.1 The defenders of Israel, with whom was the ark for which the old man's heart was trembling, were fighting far away in the south. The direct route by which tidings from them should arrive, is that which turns aside from the central highway round the screen of hills, and then runs right along the plain towards the temple knoll. Along this route Eli had tottered out, as far as, with the help of friends, he could bear his failing bulk. But the man of Benjamin "with his clothes rent and earth upon his head," who came to tell that all was lost, had good reason to He knew not but the leave the customary path. fierce horsemen of the victors might be close upon his heels. He kept to the hills where horsemen could not follow him. He ran by the ridge that screens in Shiloh on the west; and the lie of the ground visibly makes it natural that he should come down into the plain not far from the town, and only when he was considerably beyond the place where the High Priest was waiting in suspense. Just because his news

<sup>1 1</sup> Samuel iv. 13, 14.

was of irretrievable disaster, it came first to those who remained at home, not to him who had gone out to meet it.

The site of Shiloh seems to fit it for a very different fate from that which has been its portion from the days of Eli to our own. As nearly as may be in the centre of the true home of Israel, quiet and secluded yet with easy access on every side, it was fit in every way for the place that it was chosen to fill in the nation's life. In point of beauty also, it is almost if not quite unrivalled by any spot I visited in the Holy Land. In that Land, there is little of what in modern days we mean by beauty. It is proof how much stronger sentiment is with most men than taste or judgment, that so many profess to see picturesqueness above the common in its scenery. There are scenes indeed which even the calmest observer will call beautiful. There is a fierce sublimity about the Quarantana and the valley at its foot, in virtue of which they need not fear comparison with the wildest glen of Assynt or of Knoydart. The Vale of Shechem is picturesque in its fertility, and the valleys round Samaria must have been like it in the days of Ephraim's splendour. And there are few scenes on earth more gentle in their loveliness than the green oakbesprinkled valleys that entwine the northern base of Tabor. But the land as a whole is far from

beautiful. Certainly it is a land to love, a land to which, even if there had been nothing peculiar in its history, it is easy to believe that its inhabitants would cling with an affection which not many lands are able to inspire. There is character stamped on every part of it. There is an expressiveness about its rugged homeliness like that which, when it lights up a human countenance, does more than beauty to call forth interest and love. But this expressiveness is one thing, and beauty is another. And Palestine is not beautiful. There is more beauty in a corner of Perthshire or of Cumberland, there is more beauty on the Shevaroy Hills, than in all the country between Beersheba and Dan. Spots fitted to attract the lover of the picturesque by their scenic effect alone, are few and far between. But among such spots is Shiloh.

It is beautiful even now in desolation, when its hills lie naked to the sun and the last tree within their circuit is prostrate and blackening in decay. It must have been fair indeed when its slopes were green with vines and the plain adorned with trees, as it was when "the daughters of Shiloh came out to dance in the dances." The softly rounded hills, the plain winding flat around their bases, the smooth and gently sloping valleys, may be restored by imagination to their old fer-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Judges xxi. 21.

tility; and if so restored, they make up a scene which needs but one thing to make it perfect in its peaceful loveliness. It needs that gleam of water which has been well termed the eye of the landscape. It may have had that additional element of beauty in Shiloh's days of greatness. I make no pretence of having been anything of a scientific observer in my little tour. I cannot say whether there is evidence that any portion of the plain may have been a lake at one time. it looks as if it might. And it is easy to believe that men who certainly were skilful in the storage of water on a small scale, may have constructed works for irrigation, where irrigation was so much required, in those early days when there was room to hope that Israel might dwell securely for many a generation, each man at peace "beneath his own vine and fig-tree." With water gleaming through long avenues of trees, with the terraced hillsides besprinkled with olives and clothed with vines, I cannot imagine a fairer landscape, of the restful and softened kind, than Shiloh most probably presented in the days "of the elders who outlived Joshua."

But to one who regards the features of the country mainly as a means of understanding its history thoroughly, it is not the beauty of Shiloh that is most prominent. To him, the striking thing is that such a place should have been chosen to be the heart of the commonwealth in the warlike days when Israel settled in the land that had been given them. Here there are no natural defences and no advantages for constructing artificial ones. If one of the first places in Palestine in respect of beauty and convenience of access, Shiloh is about the last from a soldier's point of view. The place where the people were to hold their solemn feasts, to worship God and learn His law, was not one that could stand an assault from Evidently the idea was that beyond the enemies. outskirts of the land—beyond the passes which Israel should always have strength and courage to seal against the foe,—no invader would be allowed to penetrate. It recalls the proud city by the Eurotas, whose only bulwark was the bosoms of her sons. But, as we have seen in a previous chapter, the whole polity of Israel was directed to other ends than those which Sparta kept in view; though at points it might correspond to hers. Shiloh was to be defenceless, not that the nation might be a nation of soldiers and nothing more, but in order that the true end of the nation's being might be taught it. At the heart of Israel's life, was to be set not war but peace. War there might need to be at times upon her borders, but only peace at her sacred hearth. The aim of her being was not to gain wide dominion, but to show, within narrow bounds, how pure and devoted, how happy and how glorious, how powerful with a power not based on force, a nation might become that had the living God for Ruler. Such was the high ideal of which Shiloh in its peacefulness was the constant witness—the ideal from which Israel fell, and to which in all its history it was never able to return.

Futile it may be, but at Shiloh it is inevitable, to speculate on what the course of history might have been if this chosen nation had understood its mission and been faithful to its call. The history of Israel is a history of war. The story is familiar how the first translator of Scripture into a Teutonic tongue left much of the Old Testament narrative untranslated, lest its tales of war might encourage that love of strife which, as it was, he found it difficult to restrain. It was in deeds of blood, in "subduing kingdoms and turning to flight the armies of the aliens," that faith had for the most part to show itself in Israel. But that it should be so was not, in the deepest sense, the plan of God for the people He was training. It was only because they did not accept his training, that such severity of discipline was required. Israel was meant to be independent, and meant to defend its independence whenever it might be assailed. But it was not meant to concentrate its attention upon war. It was chosen and trained in order that it might exert not the military but the moral power which belongs

to those in whose character the mind of God is shown. Had it drawn in through the generations the life and truth implicitly contained in the laws and revelations given it, Israel might have become such a centre of peaceful influence as the world has never had till now. What Rome Imperial was in the political sphere, while the nations round the Mediterranean rested quiet beneath her rule,—what Rome Papal rather aimed at being than ever was in the moral sphere, when she was not yet corrupted by the sense of power,—that Israel might have become, and become after a nobler pattern, because her power would have been based on example and moral influence alone, if the root ideas of Moses had been allowed to mould the nation's aims and life. It may be foolish to dwell on such a vision now, but it is a vision that might have been realised without anything approaching to a moral miracle. And I am certain, for my own part, that it was some such vision that cheered the soul of the departing Lawgiver when he surveyed from the top of Pisgah the good land on which he was not to enter.

Now, Shiloh would have lent itself well to the purposes which the capital should serve of a nation like what Israel might have become if any such vision had passed into a fact. Though easy of access from all sides, it is not on any natural highway; and could scarcely have become a centre of mere trade and

money-making. If the nation's pledges to Joshua had been kept,1 the householders of Ephraim around it would have been in the social condition most favourable for drinking in the spirit of their worship and their laws, and for exemplifying it in their own lives and in the training of their families. And the site would have been admirable for such a peaceful and unwalled city as was hardly known in the ancient world—for such a city as has begun to be the accepted pattern only in the few generations since Christian civilisation has led the foremost nations to hold in theory, however little their practise may harmonise with it, that war and conquest are vulgar things by the side of "peace on earth and good-will to men." Shiloh might in time have drawn to itself, and become the instrument for developing, those talents for poetry and speculation, and practical invention, and wisdom of every kind, of which—though their actual outcome be but stunted—it cannot be denied that there were the most remarkable germs in the race that sprang from Abraham. It might have been a wiser Memphis, a holier Athens and a peaceful Rome in one. It might have changed in time the current of all men's thoughts and had its deep effect on the mould of all men's characters. Even had all been favourable, the quiet growth of many a century would have been needed to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Joshua xxiv. 16-25.

effect it; but, by force of spiritual attraction and example only, it might have grown into the moral metropolis of the world.

So one dreams when he stands amid the desolation that has come on Shiloh because those who should have felt themselves set apart by the holiest consecration that nation ever had, neglected the voice of duty until step by step they had sunk to the level of the peoples around them, or beneath it. The dream no doubt is in part a vain one. In some sense, it must have been the intention of Him whose will is done on earth, that the course of history should be what it was. But for those who have still some portion of their life to live, who have it partly in their own hands to determine what kind of influence they are to leave behind them in the world, it can never be a vain thing to see—nay, it is the highest function of history to teach them—that the choice of pleasure or of ease to be the guide of life enervates and degrades, and ends in loss that can never be retrieved.

The loss of what might have been done by Shiloh was never made up, and never could be made up, for Israel or for the world. In a sense, its place was taken by Jerusalem. But the moral work that the world required was done there with less wide and less deep effect than that with which it might have been done at Shiloh. At Jerusalem, there was a moral basis

laid so that when the completed revelation came it was not utterly neglected or misunderstood—so that the divine seed did not fall upon absolutely unpre-There was this, but there was nothing pared soil. Jerusalem never had hold enough upon the nation in its days of independent life to pour a full tide of emotion through it, even when lofty influences were dominant within itself. After the first few years of David's glory, it never commanded the nation's hearty and undivided loyalty. Least of all could it be, as Shiloh might have been, a model to draw the eyes and attract the hearts of the nations round, until they had accepted a new ideal and learnt to aim at higher ends than any nations until now have set before them. In the very nature of things, such influence was impossible for Jerusalem as had not been impossible for Shiloh. The aspect of the places marks the difference. Jerusalem is the symbol of war: Shiloh The life enclosed within the ramparts of of peace. Zion was salutary and glorious; but to the nations round it seemed based on violence. It seemed so, and it was so. In their eyes, it bore no call to higher aims, and asserted no nobler principles, than those they were guided by themselves. Against a nation of warriors, whose spirit was expressed in their fortress-capital, they felt it to be their duty—and I suppose it was their duty—to defend themselves by force. To a

nation prepared for war, yet having the unwalled defenceless Shiloh for the centre of its life and the expression of its spirit, they might have yielded an acknowledged primacy, which in course of time might have changed the history of mankind. Thus Jerusalem is the embodiment of a meaner ideal than Shiloh. Through the city of David and the national life which it expressed, God's work could still be done; but only on a lower level, and with less result, than had once been possible.

Not that men's thankful remembrance of Samuel and David, or even of Saul, should on that account be less. They did the work that it remained in their power to do. Not theirs the fault that the greater things for which Moses and Joshua had legitimately hoped had become in their day unattainable for ever. We have seen how one of them, by an evil choice, prevented the full attainment of that lower yet still lofty ideal which after Michmash and Elah it was quite within his power to realise. Yet there was nothing better possible in those days than a military monarchy, in which the divine life must be hid within a hard repellent shell. That monarchy would have been nobler and more generous than it was, if the corruption of Benjamin and Saul had not caused the crushing disaster of Gilboa and the long years of calamity that followed; but its essential type must have been the same. David saw what

was possible for him and what was possible no longer. Therefore, under the guidance of a wisdom higher than his own, he reared the political fabric of which Zion, impregnable on its rocky heights, was the fit metropolis. That he chose the right, though the lower, path, has been proved by the developments of history. Jerusalem, with all its inferiority, has become the symbol in the geography of the world of all that is holiest in men's memories and loftiest in their aspirations. Shiloh is forgotten. At the most it serves but to round a period or adorn a verse for those who adore the God who chose it once for "the tent which He placed among men." Because he knew his own time and what in his time Israel ought to do,—because thus he "served his own generation by the will of God," David was pronounced "the man after God's own heart." It is a verdict that none will challenge who have insight to discern the real bent of a great man's life, and the purpose that knits its parts together, through the veil in which his mistakes and sins have swathed it.

Thus the contrast with Jerusalem which Shiloh inevitably suggests, brings the intelligent student of the topography of Palestine face to face with the darkest mystery in the story of the world. The plainest features of the two scenes compel him to contrast the ideals which underlay the choice of the one site and the choice of the other to be the moral centre of the land. They compel him to think of the nobler polity that completely failed, and the meaner polity that in part succeeded. They raise the question which of all questions is the darkest for those who study history in the hope that they may catch some glimpse of the hidden significance of the world,—of the true purpose of Him who rules it and the issues to which it is bearing on. They raise the question why it is only the second-best that gains established influence—why the thing that is, never rises higher than to be a maimed and unsatisfying substitute for the thing that might have been.

In mere nature, the principle of "the survival of the fittest" may hold good. In human history, which always contains some elements of the supernatural, perhaps it has its subordinate influence. The present is not the place for expressing an opinion on the point. But to him who surveys the course of history from the highest and most instructive standpoint, it becomes, alas! too plain that, in matters of most solemn moment, it is not the fittest that survives. It is a mystery. It is a difficulty for those whose faith it is that, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the world is ruled by One whose wisdom and goodness and power are boundless. But not on that account must truth be forgotten or denied. And is it not a stubborn feature of history for the most part—

must we not indeed say always,—that whatever good is wrought out is marred and debased before it becomes effective—that higher aims are disappointed before there is for lower aims even a qualified success—that Jerusalem comes in place of Shiloh? For it is a feature not of Israelitish history alone which confronts us here. The higher and the holier the history, the more marked this feature is. It appears with even sadder force than it did of old, in the story of the Christian Church.

The Church has taken Israel's place as the body in which divine influences mainly dwell, and by means of which the divine work for mankind is meant to be mainly done. And Israel's sad experience of the surrender of high ideals and the necessary working on lower ones, has been repeated in it. As completely as the ideal passed away which should have been realised at Shiloh, so completely has that high theory of the Church's position in the world been shattered which for centuries it was possible to work on—the theory to which good men passionately clung till it perished in the sixteenth century, even as Shiloh did when the deeds of the sons of Eli made the cup of its judgment overflow. The day was, when the picture might have been realised of a church growing constantly more spiritually minded in the midst of safety and repose—of a church gradually learning to fill all the common things of earth with heavenly life

and to consecrate them all to the service of her God of a church contending, if forced to contend at all, only as it were upon her borders, and gathering influence as the generations passed until every darkened nation had come, of its own accord, to walk in her light and learn the secret of her joy. No man who understands providence or history can hope for, or can aim at, the realising of such an ideal now. Through continued sloth and growing corruption like that which the Israel of the Judges showed, the great opportunity was lost. The time came when such acceptance of a new ideal and a lower one as saved Israel was the only thing Those who led the that could save the Church. Reformation had a place to fill like that of Samuel, and Saul, and David. Like them, in greater or smaller measure, with greater faithfulness or less, they saw God's will and did it. But it was on a lower level than the old one that they were forced to work. The result of their contendings is that the Churches, both the Reformed and the Unreformed, are new. They carry with them, like the Israelitish monarchy, more or less of the heritage of the old; but the Church,—the Western Church, the active part of Christendom,—in all its branches, the so-called Catholic and the so-called Reformed alike,—is, from the historian's point of view, an institution that came into being in the sixteenth century, not the first. And this new creation is a

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lower thing than it once was possible that the old might be. It has elements of the common earth about it, from which, in idea—however miserably it failed in practice,—the old was free. It is warlike in its very War has filled it with jealousies and torn it into fragments. The whole form of every fragment of the New Church, the whole direction of the activity of every fragment and of the Church which these fragments unitedly make up, is determined by the state of conflict which is appointed for it now. The New Church arose from conflict, and only by conflict can its existence be maintained. It has to be fenced round with dogmas, and institutions, and contrivances of men, which it possesses in common with the corporate bodies of the world, even as Zion had her walls and ditches and gates and bars like Rabbah or Damascus. The din of war is heard at the centre of the Church's life, not merely on her distant borders. She can rest quiet no longer in her native strength—can exert no longer an ever-growing moral power by the mere fact of her existence. Effort and contrivance and strategy and skill are indispensable, if she is to do her work, or even maintain her being. And to those beyond her pale, she seems but one of the aggressive forces at work among men, exactly as the monarchy seated at Jerusalem appeared to Ammonite and Edomite and Syrian. She has lost the secret of approaching those without

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Jerusalem is her model. The nobler ideal of Shiloh has been shattered. It can be set up as the pattern on which she should frame her life no more. All this is but an example of how in every part of history the same dark problem meets us.

But, in the case of Israel and of the Christian Church, it seems as if some little light had entered when we say that the sin and perversity of the workers was allowed, for higher ends, to modify and in part defeat what may be called the first draft of the divine scheme. But this same sad problem of how only the thing that is second-best becomes effective, recurs in yet darker form when our thoughts pass on from the beginnings of Israelitish history at Shiloh to its purposed completion by that Anointed One of whom all that was pure and high, whether at Shiloh or Jerusalem, was the prefigurement and symbol. For the problem arises even in the life of lives, the life that was the full expression of the character and purposes of God.

It is commonly kept out of sight, but it is true if the Gospels are true, that, in the purely historical sense, Jesus Christ did not exert the influence he hoped for. He did not fashion the framework of his life on the pattern that he wished. The ideal he realised was meaner than the one he aimed at. In the deepest humiliation of all, in being disappointed of his highest

aims and driven to work upon a lower plan than his own, "it behoved him to be made like unto his breth-ren."

That Galilean ministry by which the gates of eternal life have been laid open, was-let it be said with deepest reverence but with no shadow of hesitation —was an afterthought. The purpose of the Saviour of men-his purpose in the sense in which the word must be used by the historian, although I do not say by the theologian,—was to set up his Kingdom of God in Judea. In the attempt to do so, he spent at least a year of his three years' ministry, and probably much longer. And as the sight of Shiloh so the thought of this, leads irresistibly to speculation as to what the course of history might have been if the earlier plan had been successful. The materials for speculation are slight enough. Yet we know of one man who in point of natural ability, and character, and training, was probably not an unfair example of what the citizens of the Kingdom might have been if it had been effectively set up among the men not of Galilee but of Jerusalem and Judea. What effects might have followed for Israel and for mankind if Saul of Tarsus had been a specimen of the earliest disciples, or if there had been hundreds like him in the company into which heavenly power was breathed at Pentecost?

It was only when the first ideal had come to nothing

that the ministry in Galilee began. As a historical phenomenon, it moved on a lower level; it aimed at lower ends, and was carried out by lower methods, than had been at first desired. It succeeded, yet it was but the second-best. Once again Jerusalem came in place of Shiloh. And if proof be needed that the great worker himself felt the falling off, it is given in the exclamation which marked his new departure and lets us so deep into his heart;—"Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe."

Those who know that along this lower level the power of God unto salvation actually came, may be thankful for the miracles that broke up the apathy of men, exactly as they should be thankful for the fortress strength and the warrior spirit of Jerusalem, by which the divine life was shielded till its work was done. That must not hinder them from seeing that this was not the method that our Lord would of himself have chosen. Like Samuel and like David, He who "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," had to use methods which in themselves were distinctly but the second-best. And yet it is certain, not only on the evidence to which Christians attach most weight but on plain grounds of history, that the work he had to do was done perfectly by Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The contradiction cannot be explained, but it must not be denied.

Thus one on whom Shiloh leaves its natural and right impression, is plunged into the greatest of the difficulties that meet those who try to read the plan of history aright. On the one hand the will of the Unseen Ruler is done on earth. His ends are gained. His purposes cannot and they do not fail. On the other hand, His purposes are defeated; and when any part of them succeeds, it is by meaner methods than He desires. Even the Son of His love, who came to do all His will, failed, as a man among men, when he took the way which he saw to be the highest and the best. Both things may indeed be believed by such as have an adequate impression of the necessary limitations of man's knowledge and the narrowness of his whole being in his present state. They may be believed, but their consistency cannot be made plain. It may be—I cannot tell—that in ages to come on earth, through humble thought and patient waiting, some rays of light may fall on what baffles every attempt to describe the real plan of history at present. the full understanding of this strangest of all the ways of God, will tax and train the powers of those who will be redeemed from among men, and for whom it is reserved to pass upward through stage on stage of expanding life while the ages of eternity endure.

Shall I give a page or two to lighter themes before

I bring these rambling papers to a close? Of course I saw much in Palestine which I do not mention in a work whose object is to treat of places and things which I not only saw but in some small measure studied. For instance, there is the great class of the "Holy Places"—places of pilgrimage for so large a part of Christendom—the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Grotto of the Nativity at Bethlehem, the Fountain of the Annunciation at Nazareth, the traditional Mount of Beatitudes, the so-called Garden of Gethsemane, and a crowd of others. About this class of places, I should like to make one remark. It must have occurred to many. It may perhaps be in print somewhere; but, obvious as it seems, I have not met with it in books.

The indignation felt by most modern travellers, especially of the English-speaking nations, with the absurdity of nearly all traditional identifications of Scriptural localities is, I think, considerably misplaced. I believe that it is mainly based on a misapprehension. I admit that it is natural to be angry at some of the extremest pieces of nonsense. Few can avoid either ridicule or indignation when the rock from which the men of Nazareth attempted to hurl the Saviour is pointed out some two miles away from the town—when they are told to recognise the dwelling of Zaccheus in a castle not older than the Crusades, or the

tomb of Absalom in a structure bearing the plainest marks of the Roman style, or the identical tree on which Judas hanged himself, in one that is palpably not much above a century old! But what the Eastern Christian seeks, and has always sought, in connecting certain places with certain events, is not so much to define the locality as to have some visible memorial of the event, to have a means of fixing its reality in his mind. Any place that may be agreed on will serve his purpose. I do not believe that those who first named the holy places crowded together in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, or those who named the different stations in the Via Dolorosa, intended to imply that each of the various events happened at the spots marked out. To them, these spots were nothing more than places where the different transactions should be called to mind. It is we Westerns who have imported into what they did a significance which it was not meant to bear. And instead of being angry with those who have different ways of looking at things from ours, it might be well to ask whether we do not follow or tolerate among ourselves a practice liable to the same kind of objection that we make to theirs. Our Eastern friends fix the commemoration of sacred events at spots where the events certainly did not occur, and often at spots where they could not by possibility have occurred. But in the

religious services of the West, where preaching holds so high a place, what is more common than to hear a meaning thrust upon a text which never had or could have a meaning of the kind? There are probably few in Britain who have not heard sermons on such texts as "Wilt thou go with this man?" or, "I am black but comely," in which the words of Scripture were made to bear a sense absolutely foreign to the thoughts of those who penned them. Most men tolerate, and some will vindicate the practice, on the ground that the text is but a motto, and that the meaning put into it is good and useful. I fail to see, however, why it is wrong to attach sacred events to places where they certainly did not occur, if it be right to attach to sacred words a meaning which quite as certainly they never had. I do not defend either practice; but those who tolerate the one are less than consistent when they grow indignant at the other.

As regards the best way of seeing Palestine—the way to get the largest possible amount of instruction and enjoyment from it, as from any country of small extent, would be to walk through it with a knapsack. Unfortunately, difficulties as to language, difficulties about accommodation, and difficulties of many kinds, make the best way of seeing the Holy Land impracticable for any one likely to be among my readers. As often happens in other things as well as travelling, the

next best thing to the very best is its exact opposite. The second-best way, and the best that is practicable, is to have a considerable caravan at one's disposal. With mules to bear food and baggage, with tents and mules to carry them and several muleteers, with a mounted dragoman, and a mounted cook, and a surefooted horse for himself, the visitor can wander at will as comfortably, as freely, and as fast—that is, in truth, as slowly—as in countries where he can carry his necessaries on his back, and find meals and accommodation when he needs them. The paraphernalia required for putting a tourist in the same favourable position which a pedestrian enjoys elsewhere, are supplied at no very extravagant cost by the world-celebrated Messrs. Cook & Son. I conceive it impossible to find any fault with their arrangements, except that they are too elaborate for those who have not come to regard a daily dinner of eight courses as indispensable for human comfort. Of the courtesy and kindness of those who represent the great tourist-protecting firm, it is impossible to speak too highly; or of their readiness to give such advice and assistance as the traveller needs for filling in the details of the plan of travel he has sketched. For in Palestine, even more than other countries which it is profitable as well as pleasant to travel in, the tourist should make the general outline of his route for himself. No doubt by doing so he will

fall into mistakes, and will miss seeing things he might easily see if he delivered himself entirely into the hands of the experienced. But what he sees he is far more likely to understand thoroughly and remember long. His mistakes, too, will often be among the things which it will be most pleasant afterwards to call to mind.

In making such a general plan as I consider indispensable, the tourist, at least if his time be anything like so limited as mine was, must be content that many things should remain unseen, and that many more should be just seen and not examined. But the absolutely essential element in a plan, is that time should be allowed for seeing some things thoroughly. the results of my own plan of travel I am fairly satisfied—though, if it were to be made anew, I should certainly find considerable improvement possible. And the chief improvement would be that I should content myself with seeing fewer things, in order that I might examine some more satisfactorily and more at leisure. Of course I speak from the point of view of the common-place tourist. To such as have a mental equipment fitting them to travel with a botanical, or philological, or epigraphical, or other scientific purpose, I do not presume to give advice.

I would venture to add that, in order to get either the proper kind or the full amount of pleasure or of

profit from a visit to Palestine, the company must be small. For myself, I travelled quite alone. It would have been better, I admit, if I had had one associate, or possibly two, whose tastes and whose theories about travelling were like my own. But I was better as I was than with any larger number even of the most congenial companions. In saying that I was alone, I am perhaps doing injustice to my good dragoman and friend, Mr. John Murcos of Jerusalem, under whose kindly care I was during the greater part, though not the whole, of my tour, and whose unobtrusive attention was a large addition to the pleasure of my journey. Like the rest of us, he doubtless has defects; but the only one I could discover was an invincible preference for short cuts—an excellent tendency perhaps in a piece of country with which one is perfectly acquainted, but apt to lead to trouble when one goes beyond it, as from time to time we did. However, my friend's propensity led to no greater trouble than was sufficient for a joke at the time, and a pleasant recollection now.

I have spoken of the second-best way of travelling in Palestine. I suppose there must be a third-best, and perhaps a fourth-best, of which I cannot speak. But of all possible ways the most fashionable is the worst. It is to join a party of from a dozen to a score, and to be "personally conducted" along a regular track,

with breakfast, lunch, and dinner arranged at predetermined hours, and a certain number of minutes allowed at,—or perhaps only just in sight of,—such famous places as can be included in a fixed and fashionable programme. As a pleasant pic-nic, enlivened by fresh air, and exercise, and talk, and free from at least the dread extremes of conventionality, the thing must be eminently enjoyable for those whose tastes are so inclined. Only to some of us it may seem that for this particular description of enjoyment most people might find a fitter scene and one nearer home than Palestine. However, I shall not argue the point. It is fortunate that tastes differ, and fortunate also that the visitor need not be driven to adopt the fashionable way of scampering through. the country in a crowd. For my own part, if the only way of "doing" the Holy Land were that which nearly all English-speaking visitors adopt, I should fall back on the alternative of which it is not easy to deprive one. At the worst, one may stay at home.



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